

"This 5X5 system will work for virtually everyone"

- GLENN PENDLAY MS USAW, Olympic coach of 97 national champions and 20 gold medalists including Caleb Ward, holder of 13 American records.

THE **5X5** REPORT



How to Build Rock Hard Muscle, Develop Brute Strength, Melt Away Stubborn Fat, And Achieve The Best Shape Of Your Life In Just 12 Weeks

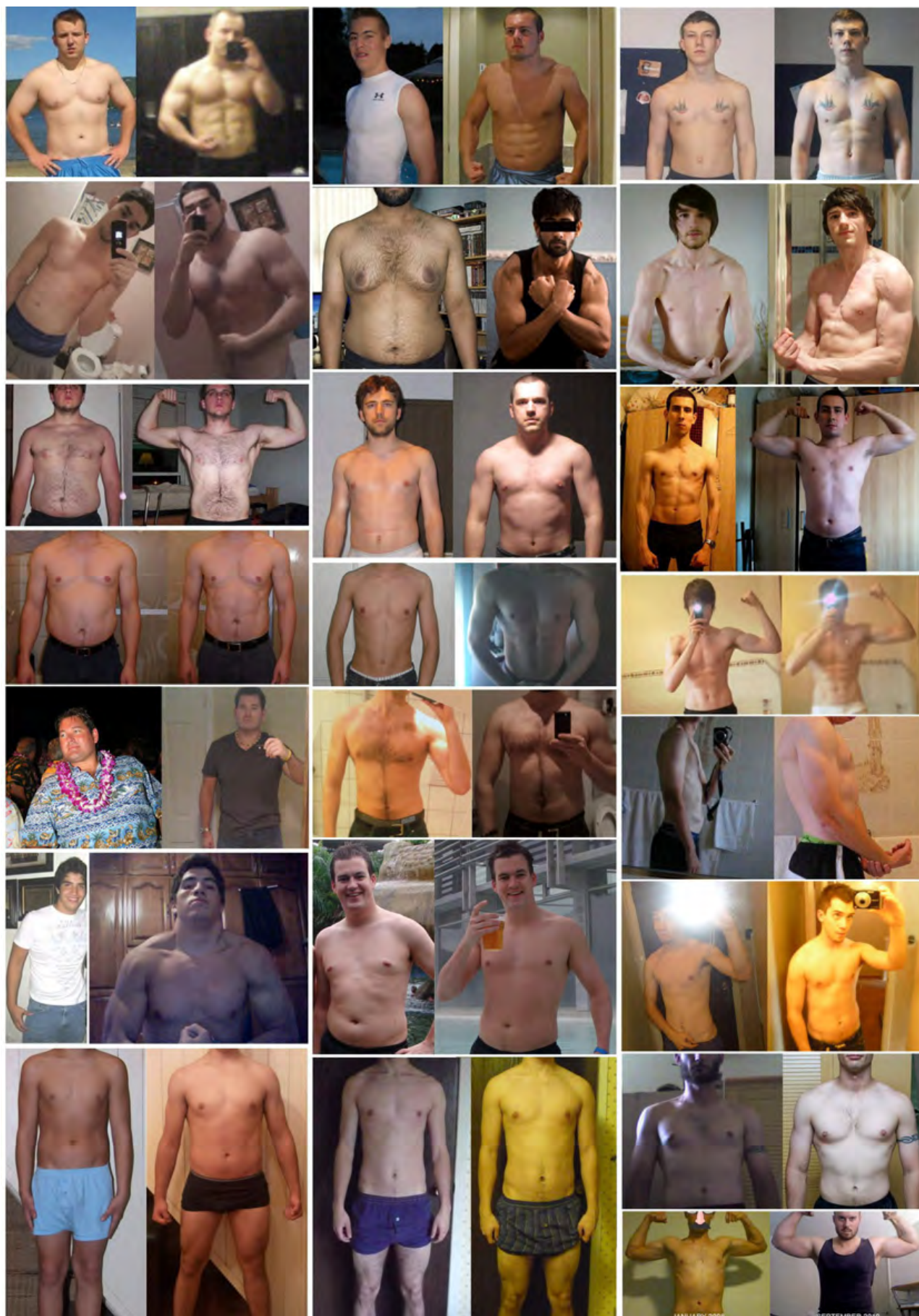
(Without Drugs Or Supplements And Training Only 3 Times Per Week)

by Mehdi

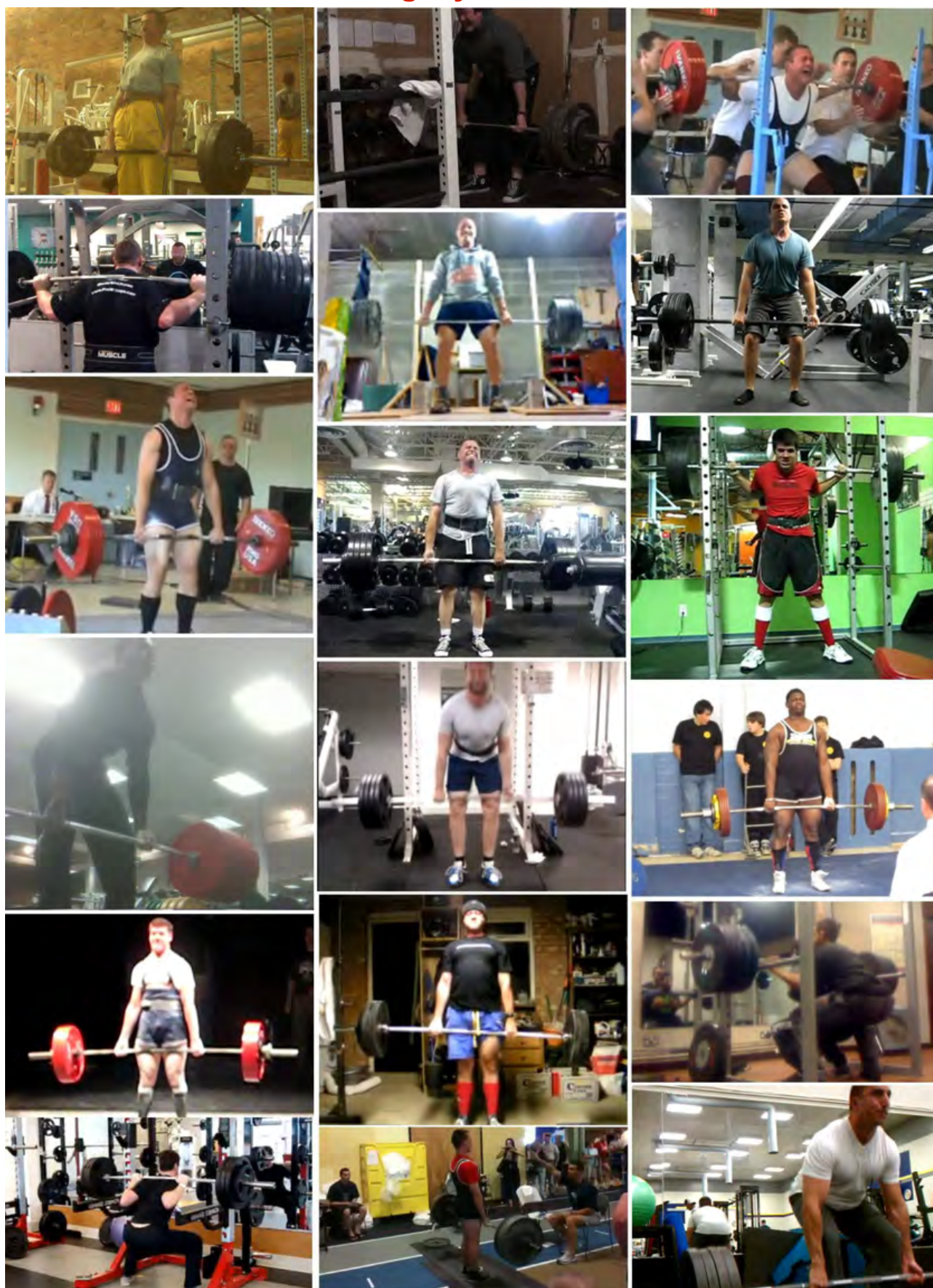
Founder StrongLifts

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Just Some Of The Guys Whose Bodies And Life Changed:



A Couple of Guys Whose Strength Skyrocketed After Putting My Advice to Work:

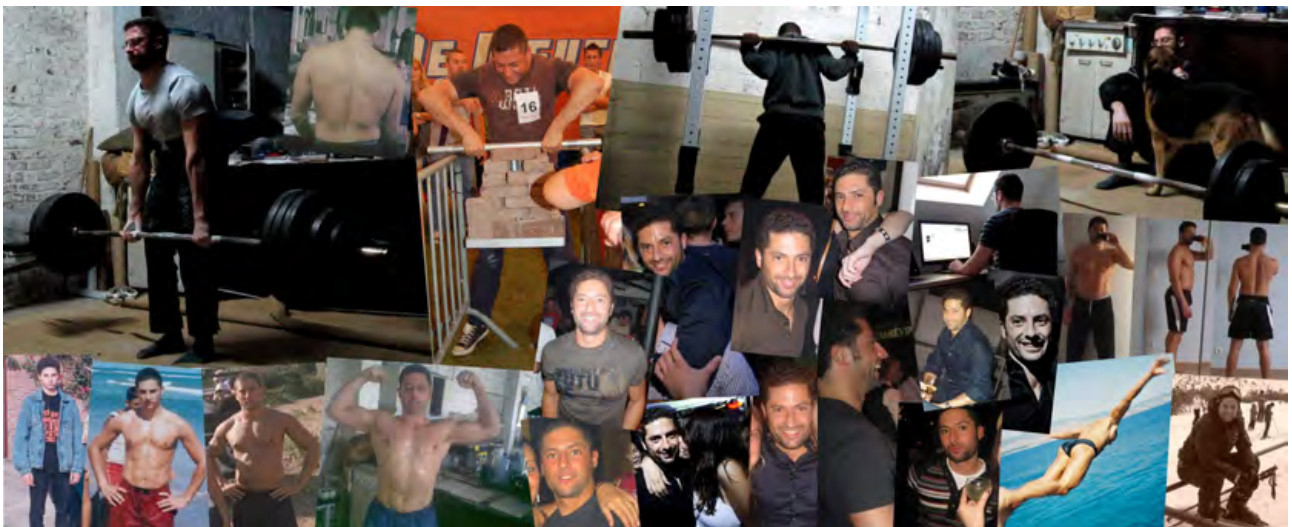


Who The Heck Is Mehdi?

If you are not familiar with Mehdi, he is a 400lbs Squatter, 500lbs Deadlifter and highly sought after strength coach with over 15 years of in-the-trenches experience presently communicating his advice to 9-million guys each year. His website *StrongLifts.com* is the premier strength and muscle building resource in the world, and has so far reached more than 15-million guys in only 3 years. His *StrongLifts Community* is the biggest strength community counting over 20,000 Members from 187 countries. As an author, Mehdi's *StrongLifts 5x5 program* has been praised on thousands of websites including Men's Health, Bodybuilding.com, T-nation, Facebook, Myprotein and too many others to list.

Mehdi's private clients routinely pay upwards from \$2,485.00 for his powerful advice... with over 85% repeating business with him. There's usually a waiting list and client candidates first have to fill in an application form describing their stats, goals and motivation. You can get a concise presentation of the strength and muscle building strategies he ranks as essential in this new 5x5 report, at no cost whatsoever.

If you can handle a candid, no-bullshit approach to weight training, free of all the myths spread by muscle magazines, and you're eager to discover why the majority of guys in the gym never get the body and strength they really want, then this 5x5 report is must-reading.



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Although weight lifting has statistically the lowest rate of injury, you should be cautioned that there is an inherent risk with any form of physical activity. Systematic bad technique and/or using more weight than you should be handling because you got carried away by your ego, are recipes for injuries. Lack of flexibility or bad posture from years of inactivity can also lead to pains and injuries. It is imperative that before beginning any training program or diet, including any aspect of the *StrongLifts 5x5 program*, you receive full medical clearance from a licensed physician.

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Every results testimonial in this book is from a real StrongLifts Member. No one was paid for a testimonial or endorsement. Before and after pictures were not retouched or altered. Results (body-weight, body fat percentage, measurements, etc) were self-reported by the StrongLifts Member and therefore cannot be confirmed. Strength stats were often verified using videos. StrongLifts Members all benefit from social support, accountability and encouragement from other Members. Without this social support you may not get the same results. Without doing the program as laid out, your typical results may differ. In the end, you may get no results at all if you just read this book without actually applying anything. There's no such thing as a Silver Bullet.

Table of Contents

Introduction

How This 5x5 Report Will Change Your Body And Life Forever.....	9
“I was skeptical... I gave it a try... I got hooked.”	11

Part I - How to REALLY Gain Muscle and Strength

Are You Sick And Tired of Training	
Every Day With Little or No Results to Show For?.....	15
Training Secrets From Arnold Schwarzenegger.....	16
Who Else Wants a World Class Physique?.....	18
How Elite Bodybuilders Build Their Physique Today.....	20
Why You Must Train For Strength Even If Gaining Muscle Is Your Goal.....	21
The Ironic Difference Between Bodybuilders And Strength Trainers.....	22
“But All Those Guys Use Steroids!!8”	26
How to Gain Muscle Without Getting Bulky.....	28
Why Personal Trainers Get Sued.....	31

Part II – StrongLifts 5x5: The Ultimate Strength and Muscle Building Program

What The Heck Is This 5x5 Method Anyway?.....	35
Give Me 12 Weeks And I'll Give You	
The Kind Of Body And Strength You Always Wanted.....	41
“They All Laughed When I Started With The Empty Barbell, But Their Laughter Changed to Amazement When They Saw Me Squatting 225 Pounds 12 Weeks Later!”	44
Amazing Secret Discovered By Greek Wrestler Adds Over 100 Pounds To Your Lifts Every Month And Super-Charges Your Motivation.....	45
Beyond StrongLifts 5x5 -- The StrongLifts Ladder of Strength.....	48

Part III - Questions and Answers

17 Reasons Why You May Say “No” to My Offer to Give StrongLifts 5x5 A Free 12-Week Trial.....	51
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Part IV - 50 Real-Life Success Stories

“But My Body Is Different”	67
20-29y olds.....	69
30-39y olds.....	120
40-49y olds.....	158
50-65y olds.....	183
13-19y olds.....	187

Part V - Resources

How to Master Technique on the Squat, Bench, Deadlift, Press, Row.....	209
How Often Have You Started a New Training Program Only to Fall Off The Wagon Weeks Later And Give Up?.....	210

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Introduction

How This 5x5 Report Will Change Your Body And Life Forever

Inside this 5x5 report, I'm first going to share the secret to gaining rock hard muscle – and then I'll reveal the powerful proven training strategy that top bodybuilders and gold medal Olympic athletes used, and still use, to build their world class physiques and strength.

The results you can expect from the training method you will do in the coming months are going to sound too good to be true. Keep in mind that I will back up my claims with genuine, real world proof from my very own StrongLifts Members and private clients. So don't take my word for it. Here are just some of the things my program will do for you...

- **Gain Muscle.** Expect to gain 25lbs of raw muscle your first year of training. Add another 12lbs your 2nd year and 6lbs your third year if you stick to the progression I'll show you. So that's 43lbs of 100% pure, natural muscle that you can achieve, even if you have “bad genetics” like me or have been training for 10 years already. .
- **Develop Brute Strength.** You'll gain a massive amount of strength on all your lifts and will get stronger than 80% of the guys in the gym (even the big steroid-using guys weighing 30lbs more than you). This strength strength will carry over to sports but also daily activities like picking up heavy objects, carrying groceries or moving furniture. All of this will be easier and you'll be impressing your friends.
- **Eliminate Stubborn Fat.** Your body fat will automatically go down by increasing your muscle mass. Man boobs and belly fat will finally vanish. And since exercise makes you stick to your diet better, you'll make healthier food choices. The real benefit though is that you'll be able to eat more than before without gaining fat, without having to skip on your favorite foods, and without eating weird.
- **Gain Confidence.** How do you think you're going to feel when people repeatedly compliment you on your dramatic physique transformation and strength gains? Obviously you're going to feel more confident and gain respect, and that is going to improve your social skills with men but also women in any kind of situation.
- **Increase Your Endurance.** Okay, you won't be able to run a marathon doing my program (but who needs that anyway?). But you will build enough endurance to run 3 miles anytime without ever doing any of that boring and painful cardio. All your endurance gains will purely come from doing my program 3 times per week.
- **Improve Your Health.** Your bones and joints will be stronger, your flexibility will skyrocket, you'll stick to your diet better, your libido will increase, your blood pressure will decrease, you may even eliminate nagging back, knee and shoulder pain forever as many of my SL Members have. All of this 100% naturally.
- **Boost Your Motivation.** You'll gain results fast while having fun – every workout you'll lift more than last time, not forever but longer than you think. This constant, measurable progress will boost your motivation: you'll look forward to going to the gym (bad news: you'll only go 3x per week) and to break your previous PR.
- **Save Time & Money.** My program only takes 3 workouts per week, and you won't need any of those expensive supplements and fancy machines. In fact, you can do the whole program at home with cheap equipment, saving tremendous amount of money on gym memberships, and gaining complete freedom as a result.

There's a lot more you can expect, but I prefer to stop here because your skepticism alarm is probably going berserk already. Just realize this is NOT a “get ripped” quick scheme, NOT a method where you'll look like the guys on the cover of muscle magazines within 7

days; NOT a method where you'll have to take expensive supplements or worse drugs to get results. You will also NOT have to spend your life in the gym training 6x/week doing 27 exercises per workout that you can't even remember. This is also NOT your "workout of the month" where you do this, then jump on the next new thing. Actually, this is NOT like anything you've ever seen before. And my method works and I can, and will, prove it.

I won't B.S. you in this report. What you're about to read is based on 15 years of training myself and coaching hundreds and hundreds of private clients – who all gained massive amounts of muscle and strength. Add the feedback of tens of thousands of StrongLifts Members who interact with me day to day. Nothing in this report comes from some armchair specialist; it all comes from spending a lot of time under the bar. This isn't a report drawn from other books by a student and spectator, it is an in-the-trenches report. And if you are living the life of the lifter, you will hear its ring of authenticity loud and clear.

It is a personal report, me talking straight with you, as if I was coaching you, and as if we were sitting around at the end of our training, just hanging out. Because it is personal, I will tell you quite a bit about myself and about my training life, past, present and future. None of this is about bragging. I have no need for that or interest in doing so. Frankly, I don't like talking about myself. But I have to do it here to convince you that I'm a guy you should take seriously even though I will present ideas that you might find difficult to accept.

Quick tip on how to use this book. I'm sure you've heard that knowledge is only power if applied. That's why I recommend you to first skim through this book, then read it back to back, and then apply what you've read immediately in the gym. Then one month from now you should read this book again. Fight the voice telling you you already know the material and do it anyway. Then one month later, read this book again for a 3rd time.

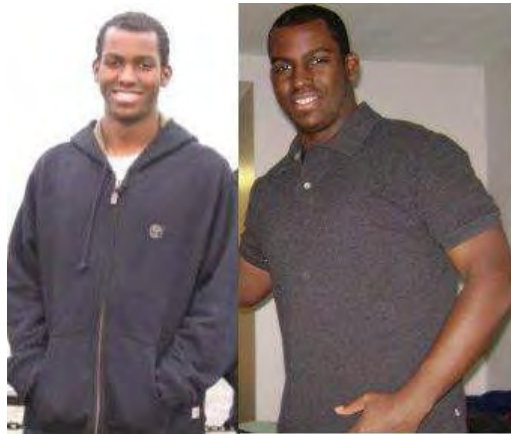
There are 2 reasons why I want you to do this. One is motivation. There's no easier way to keep yourself motivated than by reading motivational stuff regularly. This book is filled with success stories from StrongLifts Members. Read them to stay motivated.

Two, most important, is that the mind can only process so much information at a time. You will need more than just one reading to grasp everything that I've experienced the last 12y lifting weights, coaching private clients, analyzing the progress of StrongLifts Members, and that I then spent the last 6 months condensing into this book. Think about it – I'm atheist, but why do you think some people spend their lifetime reading the Bible or the Koran? It's because the material is way too dense to be understood in one reading.

This is why I want you to read this book several times. You will see things on your 2nd and 3rd reading that you didn't see the first time. And your progress in the gym will give you a better understanding of the concepts and principles because you have now experienced it. Fact is, the more you read this book, the more the material will come alive.

That said, let's start with the first real world success story from one my most accomplished Stronglifts Members to prove you that my method is truly life changing.

“I was skeptical... I gave it a try... I got hooked.”



SL Member Will before/after gaining 37lbs

by StrongLifts Member Will aka “Sid”

Will, 23, 200lbs, 6'0", from NY, USA. Graduate student in Industrial Engineering.

Before I started training, most of my time was spent sitting at my desk or on my couch. I was a skinny 163lbs from leading a completely inactive life. I hadn't played any sports or done any kind of exercise since I was 10-11 years old. Played soccer and basketball for two years, liked both, but was mediocre at best and never considered myself "athletic." Only prior experience I had with weights was in March 2008 - fooled around with random machine exercises in my previous school's gym for a few weeks. But got tired of that fast because I was weak, didn't know what I was doing and wasn't seeing any kind of results.

I discovered I had borderline-high blood pressure at a routine doctor visit in Jan '09. It was at that point that I decided I needed to "get active" and start eating better to help bring my pressure down. I was tired of being a couch potato and wanted to start "working out" but I didn't really know what to do. I did cardio for a bit, but not consistently enough to change anything and I hated running and cardio in general.

A few of my friends at my school train with weights and I figured I'd rather get into that kind of thing than just doing cardio. They told me to start out with the machines to "get used to things." It was stupid, because I was never going to build strength doing that, but at the time I figured they knew what they were talking about.

I didn't think about weight training again until May '09 when my friends who were doing BB split type stuff told me I should check out the gyms at my new school. The weight room in the gym closest to me had almost all free weights and no machines. I'd never touched a free weight in my life so I started searching online for a free weight program and came across StrongLifts 5x5.

I was skeptical at first. I didn't think something as simple as StrongLifts 5x5 would really work because of all the high-rep routines I saw in magazines and stuff, and I thought lifts like Squats and Deadlifts and doing low reps were only for advanced guys. Figured I'd give it a try though since I was a beginner and that's who the program is for. Once my lifts started going up I got hooked on getting stronger.

Will's Gains	May 2009 (Start SL5x5)	Oct 2009 (After SL3x5)	Nov 2010	Gains so far...
Age	22y	22y	23y	
Body-weight (6'0")	163lb	184lb	200lbs	+37lbs
Blood Pressure	138/75	118/65	/	
Deadlift	95lb	315lb	500lbs	+405lbs
Squat	65lb	335lb	475lb	+410lbs
Bench Press	65lb	160lb	250lb	+185lbs

I was skinny my entire life and no one would have ever considered me "athletic" before I started training. The demands of linear progression and my desire to keep my squat going up caused me to keep my food intake high, which led to the weight gain. I used to think I was "hardgainer" type, but it wasn't hard for me to get my weight up and put some muscle on my frame as long as I kept Squatting heavy and eating when my body told me to.

The only thing I can attribute the fast strength gains to is desire and consistency. Aside from a 2 week vacation, I never missed a session on SL5x5/3x5. I trained when I was sick, and when I just felt like crap (and sometimes still hit PRs.) I slept 8 hrs almost every day. I ate when I needed to eat. While at first I was skeptical, once I saw my numbers going up, I started to take this very seriously.



SL Member Will Pulling 400lbs

Blood pressure was borderline-high before I started training – back to normal now. I did zero cardio during this time. My doctor actually told me that weight training wouldn't help and I should have been doing cardio, but my BP slowly started coming down. I think the heavy Squatting three times a week alone contributed a lot to this. I was in a position where I was doing zero exercise beforehand, so my heart was getting plenty of work from Squats and Deads. I also started eating a much cleaner diet, even though I was eating much more than I was before.

I'm way more confident, outspoken, assertive. I was known for being a pretty reserved and insecure guy before I started training but not anymore. I can strike up a conversation with

anyone. Talking to women especially is much easier for me. And I am much more likely to stand up for myself in a situation where, previously, I would have backed down/kept my thoughts to myself.

I felt really out-of-place in the gym when I first started, intimidated by the bigger guys, and afraid of looking lost/like I didn't know what I was doing. When I started SL5x5, I was able to walk into the gym with a plan every time, which meant I knew what I needed to do and didn't have to worry about what anyone else thought of me. Now the gym is my second home and a great stress reliever. It's a place where I feel really comfortable, I do know a lot of guys there now and going to the gym helps me get my mind off of stress etc.

I'm stronger, I'm healthier, I look better, and I just feel better all around. Before I started training, I was doing well in school, but I didn't have much else besides that going on. I was tired a lot and lacked energy (from not sleeping and eating enough). I was physically very weak, lacked self-confidence and didn't have much of a social life after coming to a new school. All of that has reversed. I never would have started eating and sleeping better if I hadn't found SL. Since I did, my productivity is way up, since I have a lot more energy during the day. So I spend less time working. Strength training gave me direction, a means to improve my life and something else rewarding to put my energy into besides school.

My friends doing the BB splits were skeptical at first and asked me why I was training this way. By the time I finished 3x5 linear progression I was stronger than them and now they look to me as an example of how to get strong/train hard in the gym. I get a lot of compliments on my physique. Friends outside the gym have noticed the change in me and ask me what I've been doing. People I meet (guys and girls) can tell from looking at me that I train differently from most of the bench-and-curl jockey types. I've become "that guy" in the gym who went from squatting 65 to Squatting/Deadlifting 400+ in a year and some of the stronger guys refer people to me. I get a lot of questions now in the gym about the kind of stuff I'm doing.

My training log in the SL Community helps me keep going to the gym and working hard because I know if I don't, people on the forums are gonna be asking what I've been up to. And I still don't know that many people who train this way (I train alone most of the time), so it's great to have like-minded people providing support/giving me advice – almost like I have several training partners.

How many guys in the gym do you see doing isolation work day after day and never getting any stronger? Probably a lot. If you want to get strong, then you have to do the big barbell lifts. There's no need to be intimidated by this, because you'll be starting light. And the simplicity lets you do what's most important –get STRONGER by moving the weight up every time and breaking personal records. Don't be the guy coming into the gym and lifting the same weights every week. The core of the SL5x5 program is adding weight to the bar on a regular basis. Who wouldn't want to do that for as long as they can? I didn't think I'd be able to do it for long, but I kept going and haven't looked back.

-StrongLifts Member Will aka "Sid", 23, NY, USA

How to REALLY Gain Muscle and Strength

PART I

Are You Sick And Tired of Training Every Day With Little or No Results to Show For?

I sure was a few years ago. But before I explain that, let me start by sharing a little secret about the way I think: *I do NOT like reinventing the wheel*. Here's what I mean: I believe the fastest way to get somewhere is to find a guy who has accomplished what you want, study how he did it, and then copy the exact steps he went through.

That's why soon after I started lifting weights in 1999, I asked a guy in the gym who had the kind of body and strength I wanted if I could train with him. He agreed, took me under his wing and we trained together for almost 2 years, never missing a single workout. The result? Within 12 months I gained 27lbs, was Squatting 225lbs and finally eliminated my stubborn belly fat and man boobs. Most important is that I received lots of compliments from the big bouncers who were training in my gym, and this boosted my confidence.

Then my mentor quit lifting to focus on his studies and I continued alone. I had by this time hit a plateau everywhere, I wasn't getting any stronger and I couldn't figure out why. Maybe you've been in a situation like this where you can lift a certain weight easily and then the week after you suddenly can't lift it anymore. I was frustrated, and nobody in the gym seem to know a solution. Heck, I was even in better shape than the personal trainer.

So once again, I set out to find a guy who had what I wanted, discover how he did it, then copy. Since there was nobody in the gym to offer help, I decided to look for a book. Keep in mind I was training like a bodybuilder back then, I didn't know about strength training yet. Which is the first guy which comes to your mind when I say bodybuilding? Most likely Arnold Schwarzenegger, he remains the most influential bodybuilder ever.

I bought Arnold's *New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding* and started experimenting with the different split routines revealed inside the book. Training 1 muscle per day using lots of isolation exercises for 5 sets of 8 reps, always taking the reps to failure until I got pumped, forced reps on the last set, and switching my routine all the time to confuse my muscles. Progress I measured by how sore I was the day after my training.

The result? Frankly I couldn't tell you if I got more muscular than before. What I do know is that I was getting injured instead of getting stronger which made no sense to me. My lower back hurt whenever I was standing for extended time, I often couldn't sleep on my side because my right shoulder hurt so much. In fact, I had removed the Bench Press and Squat from my training because I couldn't do them pain-free anymore. My whole training now revolved about just keeping the physique I had, and this really got me bored and made me lose motivation – I was just getting by, nothing more.

The other thing that happened is that I got employed. I landed a job in “Corporate Belgium” and was now commuting 2 hours every day and working shifts and weekends. I simply didn't have the time anymore to train 5x/week for up to 3 hours like when I was a student. And I frankly got fed up with training to failure and walking with sore legs all the time.

The turnover happened in August 2003 when I went on holiday to Turkey with a friend of the gym and my mentor who had resumed training by then. All 3 of us looked muscular from all the training we did, and that obviously got us attention. To give you an example, one day we were walking at the beach and these German girls came over asking if they

could be with us on the picture because “they never had seen something like that”. How would you feel if this would happened to you? I obviously had a huge confidence boost.

But that would be only temporary. A few days later we went to those Turkish saunas and when the big guys working there saw how muscular we were, they immediately challenged us at arm wrestling. We, ignorantly, took up the challenge because, after all, these guys were all fat. Long story short, we lost to guys that had never touched a weight in their lives. And I could give you a lot of excuses, but the fact was: we looked strong but weren't.

I felt humiliated. Especially since 8 years earlier, the exact reason why I got into all of this was that I had lost at armwrestling to all my friends and then a girl. You see, I never did any sports in my life and I also wasn't born to be big or strong: while I'm now almost 50lbs heavier than 15y ago and pulling 500lbs, my wrists are still only 6.7” - my thumb overlaps my middle finger when I grab my wrists. They call that bad, hardgainer genetics. Couple that with a sedentary lifestyle of too much TV and videogames, and you understand why I couldn't even do a single Push-up at age 15 while that girl I lost armwrestling at could. It was a huge humiliation and blow to my ego, and that's why I started doing daily Push-up to overcome my weakness. By age 18 I had succeeded: I could do 70 push-ups in a row on my knuckles, had gained 12lbs and was now looked at as the “sport guy”. Few months later, in August 1999, I joined a gym to train my whole body because I had no legs.

To me, discovering that 8 years after I lost at armwrestling to all my friends and a girl, I was losing again but now to guys who had never touched a weight in their lives was simply unacceptable. I thought all that training and looking muscular, for what? It all felt like a huge waste of time, and I once again decided to do something about it. And so I began to research why it seemed like I couldn't apply the strength I had build in the gym. And that's when I discovered that I had been training wrong all the time...

Training Secrets From Arnold Schwarzenegger

The truth is that Arnold Schwarzenegger did not build his amazing physique and strength using the routines described in his book the *New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding*. He did not build his massive size and strength by doing the split routines that became popular in Gold's Gym in Venice Beach and that you'll find in muscle magazines.

As proof, consider these quotes from Arnold Schwarzenegger's biography, *The Education of a Bodybuilder*. This book was first published in 1977, 8 years before his more popular book *The New Encyclopedia of Modern Bodybuilding*, which I believe was ghost written.

American magazines wrote about the split routine as if it were my secret: it became the big thing. Everybody thought that was how I'd grown as much as I had in such a short time From the beginning, I was a believer in the basic movements, because that was Reg Park's preference. At the times Reg hadn't accelerated his workouts for some major competition, he would stay with the basic exercises.....

Reg Park's theory was that first you have to build the mass and then chisel it down to get the quality; you work on your body the way a sculptor would work on a piece of clay or wood or steel. You rough it out - the more carefully, the more thoroughly, the better - then you start to cut and define. You work it down gradually until it's ready to be rubbed and polished. And that's when you really know about the foundation. Then all the faults

of poor early training stand out as hopeless, almost irreparable flaws.....

*I was doing **heavy squats, heavy bench presses**, and this provided some of the foundation work of my body, which has always made me appear strong. Certain bodybuilders lack that look. They have good bodies but they don't appear powerful. The reason is inadequate foundation training. Good early training shows up in the muscles around the spine. There is really no exercise for those muscles; their development is just an indication that you have put in some heavy ground work, heavy squats and heavy dead lifts, a lot of lifting and rowing. I had done these exercises from the start. I developed strong basic muscles which gave me the powerful look people wanted to see.....*

I was building up, bulking, going after the mass, which to me meant 230 pounds of sheer body weight. At that time, I didn't care about my waist or anything else that would give me a symmetrical look. I just wanted to build a gigantic 250-pound body by handling a lot of weight and blasting my muscles. My mind was into looking huge, into being awesome and powerful. I saw it working. My muscles began bursting out all over. And I knew I was on my way....

*Reg Park had been a powerlifter; he had done squats with 600 pounds, bench presses with 500 pounds and dead lifts of over 700 pounds. I saw no reason why I shouldn't continue in the same groove. **I won the German championships in heavy-weight powerlifting** before I stopped. My body weight was up to 250 and I convinced myself that it was time to chisel down, to start getting more quality in my body.....*

Most guys don't know this, but Arnold Schwarzenegger was a competitive Olympic weightlifter, powerlifter and strongman from 1963 to 1968. He started lifting weights at age 15 and 1 year later he competed for the first time in Olympic Lifting in Graz, Austria. The year after he won the Junior Weightlifting competition in Syria and in 1965, at age 17, he won the Austrian Olympic weight lifting competition. After this, Arnold Schwarzenegger moved to Powerlifting, competing 4x from 1966 to 1968, winning twice and placing 2nd twice. He also won the Munich stone-lifting contest, a strongman event, in 1967.



Arnold Deadlifting 710lbs in 1968

More important to you is that Schwarzenegger was NOT born with amazing genetics like many ignorant guys will claim. In *The Education of a Bodybuilder*, Arnold reveals that he only weighed 150lbs at 6' when he started lifting weights at age 15. By 1965 he weighed 200lbs, and when he got out of the army 1 year later he weighed 225lbs. So Arnold gained 75lbs in 4 years. The obvious question is: how the hell did he gain so much muscle, so fast? (In case you think the answer is steroids, keep reading, I'll talk about that in a moment).

You already know Arnold was a competitive Olympic Lifter and Powerlifter during all this time. So how do Olympic Lifters and Powerlifters train? What kind of exercises do these guys do? You can be sure that the bulk of their training does NOT consist of isolation exercises like triceps kickbacks, biceps curls and cable exercises. Nor do they waste their

time with machines like the lat pulldown, leg curl, bowflex, total gym or smith. Olympic lifters and Powerlifters do free weight, compound exercises. They Snatch, Clean, Jerk, Press, Squat, Bench Press and Deadlift. And they do it heavy. Arnold's best lifts: 473lbs Squat, 440lbs Bench Press, 710lbs Deadlift, 264lbs Press, 243lbs Snatch, 298lbs Clean & Jerk, and a 560lbs stone lift between his legs. You can find a picture of that sick stone lift on page 87 of his book *The Education of a Bodybuilder*. I've included a picture of his 710lbs Deadlift above to prove you that I'm not making all of this up.

So this is Arnold Schwarzenegger's secret: he did NOT gain 75lbs in only 4 years using the split routines muscle magazines claim he used. Arnold did NOT do silly isolation exercises and machine work to build his world class physique that would make him win the Mr Olympia in 1970. Arnold did heavy, compound exercises and trained for strength. And he's not the only one who has used this training strategy. He learned it from his mentor...

Who Else Wants a World Class Physique?

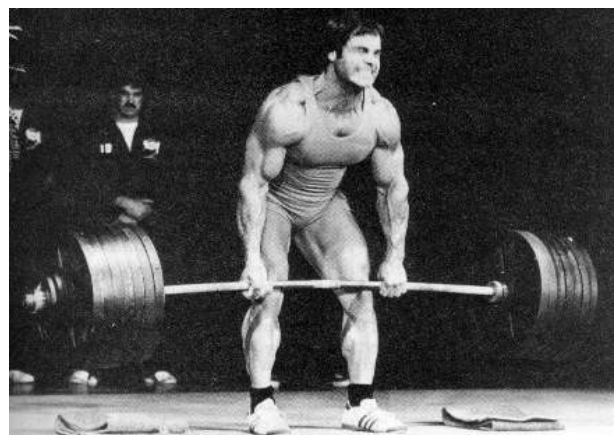
Arnold Schwarzenegger's *"Education of a Bodybuilder"* is full of references to Reg Park who was his lifelong mentor. If you've never heard of Park before, he was Mr Britain, Mr Europe and 3x Mr Universe during the 50s. Park had 20" arms, weighed 225lbs at 6'1" and was the 2nd guy ever to Bench Press 500lbs raw (I'll talk about the 1st guy who achieved this feat in a minute). Reg Park could also Squat 605lbs, Deadlift over 700lbs and Press 315lbs.



Reg Park in "Hercules"

As an actor, Reg Park starred in 5 Hercules sand and sandals. It was one of these movies that impressed the 15y old Arnold Schwarzenegger who, as a result, started training exactly like his idol to achieve the same physique. Notice the mindset: find a guy who has what you want, discover how he did it, then copy. Arnold didn't reinvent the wheel, he used what was proven to work. This is an important lesson for you.

So what do Arnold Schwarzenegger and Reg Park have in common? Incredible amounts of strength - they could both Deadlift over 700lbs. And they aren't outliers. In 1965 The Governator met a 5'5" bodybuilder from Italy in Munich. This guy was Dr Franco Columbo. Arnold and him became friends, started training together (even though they competed against each other) and eventually moved together to America in the late 60s. In fact they were such a good friends, that they started a successful bricklaying business and then a mail order business. Most guys don't know this, but Arnold was a millionaire by the age of 30, well before he started his successful acting career in Hollywood.



Franco Deadlifting what looks like 700lbs

So who the heck is Dr. Franco Columbo? Just like Arnold, this guy had a background in Powerlifting and Olympic lifting. Some of his accomplishments: Powerlifting champion of Italy, Germany and Europe. Franco also

placed 5th at the World Strongest man in 1977 (he was actually first until he dislocated his leg during an event) and was even stronger than Arnold Schwarzenegger. Franco's stats: 525lbs Bench Press, 750lbs Deadlift, 655lbs Squat, 325lbs Press, 270lbs Snatch, 400lbs Clean & Jerk. Franco could even pop a hot water bottle by inflating it orally (watch the movie *Pumping Iron* to see him do this). That's how strong this guy was, and keep in mind he weighed only 180lbs while Arnold was 230lbs.

Here are Franco's bodybuilding titles: 6x Mr Universe, 4x Mr Olympia, 3x Mr World and 2x Europe. And remember Franco injured his leg during the World Strong Man Competition in 1977. It took six hours of surgery to fix his leg. Those dumb doctors actually said he would never walk again. Yet Franco fully recovered within 3 years and then won the Mr Olympia title in 1981, the year after Arnold retired. I believe he would have won more titles had he not injured himself, and if he had not been competing against Arnold all the time. Being the 5'5" smaller guy, Franco always lost the overall title to the 6'2" Austrian Oak.

By the way, Dr Franco Columbo was also the private coach of Sylvester Stallone who he helped to achieve his best shape for Rocky 2. When you know Franco's background, you can assume that he made Sly do heavy, free weight, compound exercises.



Arnold, Stallone and Columbo - No idea who the cutie is.

So here you have 3 accomplished bodybuilders – Arnold Schwarzenegger, Reg Park and Franco Columbo – who could all Deadlift over 700lbs. It is extremely important that you understand that these guys were all very strong, that they didn't achieve their physique and strength using those silly isolation split routines from muscle magazines, but that their training consisted of heavy, free weight, compound exercises like the Squat and Deadlift.

My question to you is: **how much can you Squat and Deadlift?**

Be honest. I've trained in a commercial gym for 5 years, I helped thousands of guys to gain muscle and strength, and I know that the overwhelming majority of them neglect to train their legs because they hate Squats and are afraid of Deadlifts. And as I'm going to explain later, this is the exact reason why most guys have no results to show for. If you do not do any kind of heavy Squats and Deadlifts, you'll never get anywhere. Remember that.

But maybe you think all these oldschool training strategies do not apply today anymore. So let's look at how elite bodybuilders train right now...

How Elite Bodybuilders Build Their Physique Today

Bodybuilder Ronnie Coleman won the Mr Olympia competition from 1998 to 2005 for a total of 8 time. He also holds the IFBB record with 26 wins. Ronnie has completely dominated the bodybuilding scene and won even more titles than The Terminator. So what's this guy's secret?



Ronnie Coleman Deadlifts 800lbs

Ronnie released several DVDs over the years where you can see how he trains for the Mr Olympia competition. In *"The Unbelievable"* you can see him Deadlifting 800lbs for 2 reps while yelling "lightweight" and "peanuts" all of this 5 weeks and a half before winning the Mr Olympia 2000 competition. In another of his DVDs, Ronny is Squatting 800lbs for 2 reps.

Interestingly, Ronny rarely uses machines in these videos and has even admitted that he prefers free weights. I believe this is because he knows that free weights force you to balance the weight yourself and thus yield superior muscle gains as a result. Free weights also allow for natural movements, making them safer than machines which tend to force your body into fixed, unnatural movement patterns. But more about that later.

Here's an important quote of Coleman that sums down his training philosophy...

"Everybody wanna be a bodybuilder... but don't nobody wanna lift no heavy weight."

IFBB pro bodybuilder Johnny O Jackson also believes in heavy, free weight, compound exercises like the Squat and Deadlift. And he has, just like Arnold Schwarzenegger, a background in powerlifting and has even broken several American records. In fact, at the USPF 2008 National Powerlifting Championships in Rhode Island, he almost broke the world record Deadlift with a 821lbs pull. Here are some of Johnny's best lifts: 804lbs Deadlift, 825lbs Squat and 545lbs Bench Press.

The important detail here is that Johnny O Jackson has competed in powerlifting since 2000, 3 years before he became an IFBB pro bodybuilder. During the past decade, he has continued to compete in powerlifting WHILE competing as a professional bodybuilder. You can even find a video of Johnny O Jackson training with powerlifter Matt Kroc as part of his preparation for the Mr Olympia 2009 (I'll tell you who Matt is in a moment).



Johnny O Jackson – Powerlifter and Bodybuilder

So why does Johnny O Jackson train for strength even though he is a professional bodybuilder? Here's a quote where he

reveals what he believes is the secret to building muscle....

*"Bodybuilders these days think there's a way around hard work for getting big. They think that with just a few more reps and isolation exercises, everything will be fine. But **nothing can replace heavy lifts.**"*

This means that Johnny O Jackson and Ronnie Coleman both strongly believe that the secret to gaining muscle is NOT high rep isolation exercises on machines, but heavy, free weight, compounds like the Squat and Deadlift. Are you starting to see the trend?

Why You Must Train For Strength Even If Gaining Muscle Is Your Goal

Here's the bottom line: muscle size is directly related to strength gains. It doesn't matter if you get pumped and sore from your workouts, nor does it make a difference if you reach failure on each set or not. The only thing that matters is – are you getting stronger?

- The guy who can Bench 245lbs for 5 reps will have a bigger, more muscular chest than the guy who struggles to Bench Press 135lbs.
- The guy who can Squat 380lbs for 5 reps is always going to have more muscular legs than the guy who can't even Squat 170lbs for 5 reps.
- The guy who can Deadlift 495lbs will have a more muscular back than the guy who never does any kind of Deadlifts, but wastes his time on the lat pulldown.

Maybe you only want to gain muscle and don't care about developing strength. But the fact remains that if you are not lifting weights heavier than 6 months ago, then I can guarantee you that you won't gain the muscles you're after. And getting pumped using a myriad of supersets and drop sets so you wake up sore the day after won't change anything about that – the guy Squatting 170lbs will always be less muscular than the 400lbs Squatter.

This isn't just an anecdotal fact as illustrated by bodybuilders like Arnold Schwarzenegger, Reg Park, Franco Columbo and Ronnie Coleman. This is also a scientific fact that has been proven 35y ago already. Here's one of the oldest research papers from Goldberg AL, et al. (Mechanism of work induced hypertrophy of skeletal muscle. Med Sci Sports. 1975 Fall;7(3):185-98) that proves that muscle size is directly related to strength gains.

"It is suggested that increased tension development (either passive or active) is the critical event in initiating compensatory growth."

This increased tension is adding weight to the bar. I call this method Progressive Loading. And this isn't just the most effective strategy to gain muscle, it's also the simplest one. No, you can't add weight every workout forever, that would be way too easy, but you will be able to do this for a very, very, very long time as you'll discover in the coming weeks.

A less obvious reason why Squatters and Deadlifters are always more muscular than the guys who neglect these exercises, is that Squats and Deadlifts are more challenging.

- They force you to balance the weight yourself
- They allow you to stress your body with the heaviest weights possible.
- They work several muscles at a time, not just your legs but your whole body

Everybody knows that the guy who works the hardest will accomplish the most impressive gains. Well it's way more easy to do this using compound exercises like the Squat and Deadlift that allow you to use heavy weights to start with. Training intensity is higher, and thus you achieve more muscle and strength gains.

It is crucial that you understand that training until failure to get pumped and sore are NOT necessary to gain muscle, nor are they indicators of progress. This means you don't have to do all those painful supersets, drop sets and forced reps. The only thing that matters is that you do get strong. If you don't: you won't be gaining muscle – end of story.

The Ironic Difference Between Bodybuilders And Strength Trainers

If you train in a commercial gym like I did for 5 years, what you will notice is that most guys rarely train their legs. Some even never train them at all - the Captain Upper-bodies as I call them, big upper-bodies with chicken legs. Their routine usually consists of high rep isolation exercises like curls in the Squat Rack, triceps kickbacks and ab crunches, with Monday being national Bench Press Day and Tuesday National Bench Day part 2.

The result? 85% of these guys train like bodybuilders (or they think they do) but never look like one. Just go take a look at your local gym: how many guys actually gain muscle and strength with those B.S. routines? The large majority get nowhere and that's why they quit going to the gym within months (a minority gets results, and I'll explain why in a minute).

Now if you look at the physique of guys who do train for strength – powerlifters, strongman and Olympic lifters – you'll see that these guys almost always look more muscular than the guys doing those silly bodybuilding routines from muscle magazines. The irony.

First example: Powerlifter Matt Kroc, who as I said earlier trained with the pro bodybuilder Johnny O Jackson as preparation for Johnny's Mr Olympia 2009 competition. Matt Kroc is the record holder in the 220lbs Powerlifting class with a 1003lbs Squat, 738lbs Bench and a 810lbs Deadlift. The picture on the right is from his first (!) bodybuilding competition – Mr Michigan in 2010 – where he took the first place in the heavy weight class.



810lbs Deadlifter Matt Kroc Wins 1st Bodybuilding Competition

Muscle magazines will tell you you need to get sore and pumped to build muscle, and that strength training alone won't cut it. But you just got to look at powerlifters like Matt Kroc to see the truth: strength training builds muscle, and it does it amazingly well.

Another example, Russian powerlifter Konstantin Konstantinovs who until recently held the world record of the raw deadlift at 939lbs. How many guys doing those silly bodybuilding routines and machine work end up looking like this?



Konstantin Konstantinovs, +900lbs Deadlifter.

Next, Kirk Karwoski. 6 time world powerlifting champion and IPF world record holder in the Squat with 1001lbs in the 125kg weight class. “Captain Kirk” isn't just freaky strong, he also has a powerful physique to back it up. Look at him.



Captain Kirk, 1001lb Squatter

And this doesn't happen with just powerlifters. Look at the physique of Olympic Lifter Ivan Stoitsov from Bulgaria, gold medalist at the World Championships in 2007...



Ivan Stoitsov, Olympic Gold Medalist

Strength trainers are almost always more muscular than bodybuilders because muscle size is directly related to strength gains. Yet most guys get confused by the super heavy

weight athletes in Powerlifting, Olympic lifting and Strongman competitions who are – I admit – often “fat”. One example is the 2x Olympic gold medalist Hossein Rezazadeh who competed at 358lbs at the 2004 Summer Olympics in Athens. He is indeed “fat”.



Hossein Rezazadeh, 2x gold medalist.

The reason some strength trainers are fat is because of their bad diet. These guys have huge amounts of muscle as a result of their training, but a layer of fat covers them. Realize strength gains requires optimal recovery which largely depends on your food intake. Some guys take the junk food route because it makes getting a lot of calories easier.

While I do not agree with this approach to nutrition, it is well known that world class athletes are notorious bad dieters. As an example, consider the “Baltimore Bullet”, Michael Phelps, 14x Olympic gold medalist. The NY times reported in August 2008 that his diet consisted mainly of pizzas, pancakes, sugary laden energy drinks and white bread. This guy also likes to party, drinks and has been caught smoking marihuana. I say he's lucky to spend 6h/day, 6x/week in the pool or he would get fat.

Same with American Football player Bruce Carter who has set UNC linebacker records in the Power Clean (374lbs) and the vertical jump (40.5 inches). The 238-pounder has also been clocked at 4.39 in the 40 and bench-presses 440lbs. Quote from an interview...

“How strict are you about diet?”

“Well, not very. I eat a lot of McDonald’s and fast foods, but I do work out real hard.”

“Like how much McDonald’s?”

“Almost every day. I usually get three double cheeseburgers, medium fries, large tea and a six-piece McNuggets. I don’t think eating healthy as far as eating salads and that stuff really works for me.”

3x Olympic gold medalist Usain Bolt, world record holder of the 100m sprint, is also a chicken nuggets lover. And while there's no problem with eating junk food a few times per week (I do eat and like McDonald's) massive amounts of junk food every single day is pure laziness and asking for health problems. That's why, as you'll discover in the coming months, I will show you a more healthier approach to dieting.

But there's another important reason why some powerlifters, strongman and Olympic lifters are fat - they just don't care! Realize they're involved in a strength sport where the winner is determined by who lifts the most weight, not who has the most ripped abs. Yet this does not mean that there's no muscle underneath the fat.

As an example, consider powerlifter Dave Tate who Benchded 610lbs, Squatted 935lbs and Deadlifted 740lbs. Dave also used to be a notorious bad dieter, eating massive amounts of pop tarts, McDonald's and Snickers. One day, for health reasons, he decided to clean his diet. Pay attention to his physique transformation below...



935lb Squatter Dave Tate before and after losing fat

His muscles were always there. You just couldn't see them because a layer of fat covered them. Here's why: muscle mass is directly related to strength gains while “definition” is a matter of diet – calories in vs. calories out. If you eat less calories than your body burns, you will lose fat (yes there's more to it, but that's what it always comes down to).

Another example is Powerlifter/strongman Dave Gulledge. He has Bench Pressed over 700lbs, Squatted 930lbs and Deadlifted 735lbs. Check his physique transformation after he decided to pay closer attention to his diet.



700lbs Benchner Dave Gulledge before and after losing fat

This is the ironic difference between bodybuilders and strength trainers: the guys who train for strength and eat right are almost always looking more like bodybuilders than the guys doing isolation split routines using machines without a strength focus. I've stressed why over and over already: **muscle size is directly related to strength gains**. This is a scientific, anecdotal, proven fact that you can not ignore.

“...But Those Guys All Use Steroids!!! Does This Work For 100% Naturals Without Amazing Genetics?”

Let's be honest here - several of the guys I listed have tested positive on steroids or have admitted using them. Arnold Schwarzenegger revealed in an interview in 1974 that he used steroids. So did Dave Gulledge admit steroid-use. Even Ivan Stoitsov was tested positive for steroids and was banned from the 2008 Olympics in Beijing as a result.

But this doesn't mean that naturals won't gain muscle if they train for strength. In fact, the opposite is true, if you train naturally like me and do one of those muscle magazine B.S. routines, you will waste a lot of time and effort and make zero muscle gains. Worse, you may start to believe that you actually need supplements and amazing genetics.

Again, the secret to gaining muscle is adding weight to the bar. You have to get stronger to build muscle. And whether you take steroids or not, won't change anything about that. The stronger guy is always going to be the one with the most impressive gains. As an example, 8x Mr Olympia Ronnie Coleman won 4x in a row against his main competitor, Jay Cutler. Cutler placed 2nd every single year and only started to win when Coleman retired. How come Coleman always won? What made the difference? What was his secret?

Before I give you the answer, I'll tell you what it's not – NOT steroids. These guys both have access to the latest cutting edge steroids, and they're using massive amounts of it. Why do you think Ronnie Coleman competed at 305lbs at 5'11" while Schwarzenegger competed at *only* 235lbs at 6'2" almost 35y earlier. These guys both trained the same way, could deadlift over 700lbs and are considered genetic freaks. But then why was Coleman 70lbs heavier than Schwarzenegger, who was taller and the best guy of his time?



Why was Ronnie Coleman 70lbs heavier than Arnold?

The reason the Mr Olympia today has turned into this freak show of 300lbs behemoths with huge guts, is that they're using massively amounts of steroids. Yes Schwarzenegger used steroids, but only 2 months per year before competition to avoid muscle loss when dropping body fat, and in much smaller dosages than today. The difference is shocking: he was 70lbs lighter than the genetically enhanced mutant Ronnie Coleman.

And yet the rules haven't changed. The stronger guy will always have the most impressive muscle gains even when using steroids. And that was Ronny Coleman's secret. He won the Mr Olympia title 4x in a row against his main competitor Jay Cutler because Coleman could Deadlift 800lbs for 2 reps, while you can find youtube videos of Cutler struggling with 405lbs ... at 310lbs body-weight! I'm only 170lbs and I Deadlift 405lbs any time with ease. Cutler is a weakling and that's why he lost every single time until Coleman finally retired.



Jay Cutler pulling only 400lbs while Ronnie Coleman pulls 800lbs

The guy who uses steroids can get away with silly high rep isolation split routines because the drugs are telling his body to gain muscle. It doesn't matter how he trains, everything will make him grow muscle. You should therefore watch out with the advice coming from gym bros who often use steroids, but won't admit it. These guys may be a lot bigger than you even though they Squat only half the weight you will on the program you're about to begin. It's the steroids that allow them to get big even though they aren't strong.

Most guys dramatically underestimate steroids use. I trained 5 years in a commercial gym and was good friends with many of the bouncers training there. All those bouncers were using steroids, and several sold them. I estimate that about 80% of the guys in that gym were using steroids too. My mentor and I never did, because we looked better and lifted more weight than all those steroid users who had yo-yo muscle gains on and off their cycle and who never did any Squats and Deadlifts. Made no sense to us to use steroids.

Quick side note: it was actually assumed that we were using steroids while we were one of the few naturals. This is the world we live in today. Some people will assume that if you accomplished something through hard work, you somehow "cheated". Either with steroids or better genetics or whatever that makes them feel better about their lack of gains. It's envy and jealousy of what you can do and they can't. Ignore those crabs.

So the answer the original question: yes training for strength will work for naturals without amazing genetics. I'm 100% natural and was born with hardgainer genetics (120lbs at age 15, couldn't do single Push-up, 6.7" wrists) and I assure you I have better results - not just in strength but also in physique - since I no longer do those silly, time-consuming, injury causing bodybuilding routines that I did for 5 years because I didn't know any better.

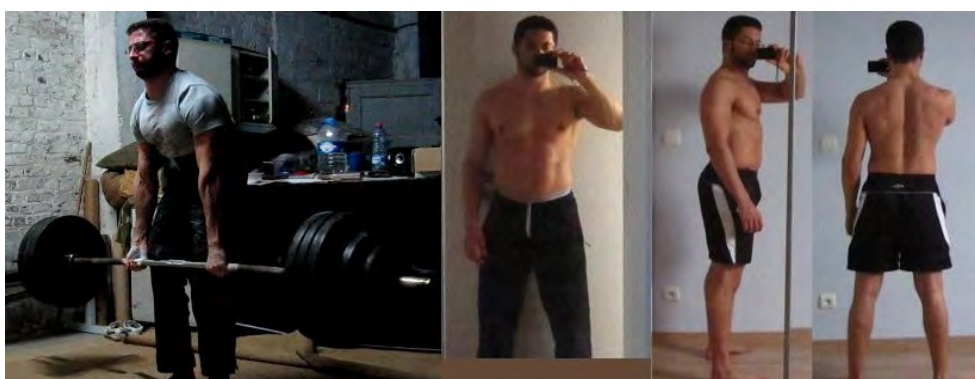
How to Gain Muscle Without Getting Bulky

So far I've mostly showed you physiques of guys who got extremely big with strength training. But maybe you don't want to become bulky like that, you just want to become stronger and muscular while staying lean. This may be because you do a sport like boxing where you have to make certain weight classes, or because you do a sport like climbing where a higher body-weight can work against you.

First some myth debunking – lifting weights will NOT make you bulky unless you start eating more. You will never be able to become like Ronnie Coleman as long as you train naturally. You will also never turn into one of those 270lbs behemoths featured on the cover of muscle magazines. Watch the documentary *“Bigger Stronger Faster”* - Christian Boeving admits that cover guys use drugs. And remember: Arnold only weighed 235lbs.

Maybe you know one of those skinny guys who trains 6x/week, drinks 3 shakes every day, yet never gains a single pound. Why do you think he can't gain weight? Because he doesn't get that he needs to eat more calories than his body burns to gain weight. You do need to get stronger to gain muscle. But to get bulky you need to gain weight. And the only way you're going to gain weight is if you start eating more calories than your body burns. Lifting weights only won't get you there. Add the genetic limit on how much muscle you can add to your frame naturally that largely depends on your build and bone structure.

As an example, I've been lifting weights since 1999 and so far Squat 400lbs and Deadlift 500lbs. Yet while everybody notices that I lift weights, I'm not bulky – I wear 32 size pants and size L shirts (european sizes). Look at my full body pictures below.



Me Deadlifting 462lbs at 170lbs BW on the left, yet not bulky.

How come I'm not bulky even though I'm stronger than most guys? One because I'm 100% natural - I never used steroids. Heck I don't even use whey. Two, I only weigh 170lbs at 5'8". In case you wonder why I don't weigh more – because after gaining 50lbs and losing those man boobs and belly bulge that I was embarrassed about, I've reached a point where I'm confident about the way I look. Frankly, I don't think I look special, but I have no issues walking shirtless or undressing when getting intimate with a woman, nor do I have any need or want to be the biggest guy in the group (even though almost all my friends are way taller than me). I feel comfortable with my body and only care about gaining strength.

Now if I would decide to weigh more, I'd have to start eating more calories than my body burns. But since I'm only 5'8" and born with hardgainer like genetics (my wrists are only 6'7") I would most likely never get heavier than a lean 190lbs anyway – unless I start

taking steroids or let my body fat increase. Most guys don't realize this, and some don't want to accept it, but there's a genetic muscular limit. Why do you think competitors in drug-free bodybuilding competitions never weigh more than 200lbs, with most competitors in the 165lbs weight class? You just don't get to 300lbs like Ronnie Coleman naturally.

Dr Casey Butt Phd, author of *"Your Muscular Potential"*, has analyzed anthropometric measurements of more than 300 drug-free champion bodybuilders and strength athletes from 1947 to 2007. After 6 years of research he has come up with a set of equations to measure your genetic potential based on your height. For a guy with 7" wrists and 9" ankles who wants to achieve a muscular body with 10% body fat, this is the maximum body-weight you can achieve naturally according to his data...

- 5'8" => max 190lbs
- 5'10" => max 199lbs
- 6'0" => max 207lbs
- 6'2" => max 216lbs

This is NOT your lean body mass, this is your total body-weight when you step on the scale for your given height and at 10% body-fat. Quote from Dr Casey Butt Phd:

"In reality, it will take years of dedicated, productive training for most genetically typical trainees to even approach these predictions. Most people, including champions, will never achieve this level of development throughout all of their muscle groups - and measurements taken at higher body fat levels do not reflect true muscular development. If you reach 95% of most of these predictions - in lean condition - you will stand out in almost any gym. In fact, 95% represents good lifetime goals for most genetically typical, drug-free trainees. At a lean 90% you'd look like a fitness model."

Take 90% of my genetic limit of 190lbs and you get 171lbs. I have no idea what my body fat is, nor do I care, but looking at the pics it's clear that it's fairly low and I weigh 170lbs. So while I may not think that I look that special, for a lot of people I do, which explains why I often get guys or girls asking me if I lift weights or something (my girlfriend asked me the first time she saw me, and it was winter with me wearing a woolen turtleneck).

This is a tough pill to grasp for most guys because they're brainwashed by these muscle magazines who keep showing guys weighing 270lbs. Add the Mr Olympia competitions with guys like Ronnie Coleman and Jay Cutler weighing over 300lbs and then the super heavy weights in powerlifting, strongman and olympic lifting who often weigh 350lbs.

You can't forget that Arnold Schwarzenegger *only* weighed 235lbs at 6'2" when he won the Mr Olympia competition. His training partner Franco Columbo won the Mr Olympia at only 180lbs. These guys were the best of their times, yet they'd look "skinny" compared to the heavy weights today. And Arnold admitted using (although small doses) of steroids.

The most important guy you need to remember though is Arnold's mentor, Reg Park. He was born before steroids existed and weighed 214lbs at 6'2" when he won the Mr Universe in 1951. Considering Dr Casey Butt's equations of what is possible for naturals, Reg Park is a good example of the kind of lean physique that you could accomplish naturally.

Bottom line: you will not get bulky overnight by just touching a barbell. To get bulky, you

have to eat more calories than your body burns. If you don't eat more on purpose, you will get muscular from doing heavy free weight compound exercises, but not bulky.

If anything, the fat loss that will occur as a result from gaining strength will make you look smaller at the same body-weight because muscle is denser than fat. As you can see on the picture right. 5lbs of muscle takes less space than 5lbs of fat. So you will look more athletic at the same weight.

Finally, most guys I've coached are severely under-weight by at least 20lbs and need to eat more. I often see guys being afraid of eating a lot, this is obviously going to hurt your strength gains. Just get strong, eat lots of healthy foods, and the physique will take care of itself – you won't turn bulky, you won't turn into a fatter, you'll just get muscular.



You've Been Lied To!

Here's the truth: almost all major muscle magazines own or are owned by a supplement company. Men's Fitness, Flex and Shape magazine are all owned by Weider Global Nutrition, a major supplement company founded by Joe Weider himself. These magazines will on purpose put you on those isolation split routines that only work if you were born with amazing genetics or if you're using steroids. Their goal is for you to not get any results, so you eventually start to believe that supplements are truly the missing ingredient. Frankly, these magazines are plain advertisements disguised as information.

The bad news is that most supplements are useless. The ones who claim drug-like results can't work or they'd be classified as drugs by the FDA. Supplements will never be more than powdered foods. Profit margins are obviously huge when you sell people pills that do nothing, that's why they can spend so much money on outrageous advertising.

Not all magazines are of course owned by supplements companies. But almost all of them have supplement ads and rely on them for their revenue. It would be very stupid for them to tell you that supplements don't work as it would offend the companies spending tens of thousands of dollars each month on ads, and thus put the magazine out of business.

Some magazines don't run supplement ads at all. Yet they will still mislead you with their "workout of the month" in every issue, justifying this by claiming that it is imperative to confuse your muscles. The truth is that muscle confusion is a marketing gimmick intended to make you buy each new issue of that magazine. Why do you think they feature a new "workout" each month? And why do you think there are now also websites that have started to give you their "workout of the day" or "workout of the week"? They're all shamelessly trying to get you hooked so you come back for more.

But it's not because muscle confusion sells that it also works. It is a scientific fact that muscle size is directly related to strength gains. Remember: Arnold Schwarzenegger could Deadlift 710lbs before he became 7x Mr Olympia. And I assure you you won't get that strong by switching exercises, sets and reps all the time. You just can't master technique or track gains efficiently. Fact is, if you really want to confuse your muscles, here's a simple way to achieve this: lift more weight than you did last time. Now they're confused.

Frankly, muscle magazines are doing to guys like you what magazines like cosmopolitan have been doing to women for years: playing on your anxieties about your body and sexual performance. This is illustrated by their relentless focus on developing “the perfect body” as illustrated by their covers featuring celebrities with 6 packs abs and rock hard chest muscles.

What they won't tell you is that those pictures are all photo shopped, and the cover guys went on a special diet and training program to get in shape for that photoshoot. Those guys do not look like that year through, because the radical methods they had to use to get in shape are unsustainable. Just look how Gerard Butler turned into a fat lard 4 years after starring in the movie 300 for which he had to do those extremely grueling metcons workouts. This is NOT Sparta, this is REALITY.



Gerard Butler in “300” and 4y later on holiday in Barbados.

Why Personal Trainers Get Sued

Then there are the personal trainers. Almost all of them are, quite bluntly, plain idiots. They waste people's money and time with dangerous inadequate routines. Many trainers want to make their clients suffer. They'll take a fat guy with zero endurance and make him do HIIT. Obviously, you'll get anyone tired and fatigued that way, that's really easy. The question is: does it yield any kind of results except throwing up your breakfast?

If you ever hired one of those personal trainers, you know that they made you feel like achieving the body you want would be hard. It's not your fault if you feel like quitting, I'd be thinking the exact same thing. I have often said that the best training program is the one you stick to. Well you don't teach someone to build the habit of exercising by making him puke on his very first day. Personal trainers who like to make you suffer are NOT qualified. Why do fitness industry statistics show that 80% of the guys who set out to be personal trainers quit within 2 years? Because they're clueless, that's why.

Just look at that picture of this guy doing barbell squats while standing on a swiss ball. Now I might have done 400lbs Squats with my hips going lower than my knees - which those idiot trainers will claim is dangerous - but I will NOT Squat while standing on a swiss ball. That is just plain stupid and asking for injuries. If you want to train your stabilizing muscles: lift heavy barbells, that will get you plenty of work as you'll discover in the next months.



This is why they get sued

My guess is personal trainers want to appear cutting edge to you, and that's why they will make you pull a weight or push it overhead while you have to stand on one leg on a bosu ball. But the trainer himself couldn't do this without quasimodo form if you'd ask him.

The most important question you should ask yourself is – once again - will this get me results? Certifications have become meaningless. For a few hundreds of dollars you can go to one of those personal training boot camps and get certified in only 2 days. Now do you really think it is possible to learn everything there is to learn about how to coach people – programming, technique, nutrition and most important, motivation - in only 48 hours? This isn't just about holding a clipboard and counting some reps. Yet this is what the fitness industry has come down to. It no longer matters if you had any former training experience. You just have to be willing to put the money down. And for some extra money and a yearly fee you can open your own gym within a week. Yes, it's that easy.

The worst part is that almost all those personal trainers who get certified never continue educating themselves. They only care about making money and don't understand that they should invest a large amount of that into education. I read 100 books per year, hundreds. What do they read? That nonsense in muscle magazines I'll tell you.

The problem is that clients don't know the difference. Anybody can read a book and pass some tests, but it's putting all that knowledge and making real people transform their body and life that turns you into a highly sought after coach. Does that personal trainer look fit? Is he a biceps boy with 6 pack abs but skinny legs? Do you see him do Squats and Deadlifts? If the answer is no to one of more of these questions, avoid him.

If the answer is yes, ask for actual and documented proof that he has helped other guys achieve the same kind of results. It is one thing to accomplish results yourself, but it is a completely different thing to make others achieve the exact same results. Before/after pictures and testimonials, like the dozens of pictures and the 51 success stories I've included in this book, are therefore absolutely critical.

Frankly, there is just nobody else who will be able to show you as much actual and documented real-world proof as I have included in this book. I challenge you to find one. And keep in mind I didn't even include everything I have in order to keep this book to reasonable size. I don't tell that to be arrogant or to brag, but to illustrate this point: you shouldn't trust people who can't provide you with actual proof that they really know what they're talking about.

Now I want to switch gears and talk about what I believe is the most powerful training strategy to gain muscle and strength. The 5x5 method...

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www.stronglifts.com

StrongLifts 5x5: The Ultimate Strength and Muscle Building Program

PART II

What The Heck Is This 5x5 Method Anyway?

5x5 stands for 5 sets of 5 reps which is what you'll be doing on the program that I'm about to share. Important to note is that while I urge you to do the program exactly as laid out, the secret to this program is NOT the 5 sets of 5. Coach Glenn Pendlay MS USAW who uses this training system with his winning gold medal Olympic athletes once called the 5x5 method "*a philosophy, a structure, a framework*". And that is really what this is about.

Nobody knows who invented this training method, and I definitely do not take credit for it. All the research I've done has lead me to Arnold Schwarzenegger's mentor, Reg Park, who was the first guy to publish the 5x5 method in his book *Strength & Bulk Training for Weight Lifters & Body Builders* (1960). This book contained the secret training system Park had used to develop his world class physique and strength, and that Arnold Schwarzenegger later successfully copied – the 5x5 method.

Now here's what's interesting. Remember when I said that Reg Park was the 2nd guy to ever Bench Press 500lbs in 1957? Well the 1st guy who achieved this feat in 1953 was the Canadian World Champion weight lifter and 2x gold medalist Doug Hepburn (760lb Squat, 705lbs Deadlift, 381lbs Press and eventually 580lbs Bench). Well turns out that Hepburn, who was born 2y before Reg Park, also used the 5x5 training method to gain strength.



Doug Hepburn, 1st guy to ever Bench Press 500lbs

Even more interesting is that Doug Hepburn trained in Ed Yarick's Gym in Oakland California. This place produced some of the greatest bodybuilding and strength champions the world has ever known like bodybuilder and actor Steve Reeves (Mr Universe 1950, highest paid actor in Europe at the peak of his career) and Olympic champion John Davis (2x gold medalist and 6x senior world weightlifting champion, could Deadlift 705lbs, Squat 525lbs and Press 342lbs).

Why is all of this interesting? Because the Brit Reg Park trained in Ed Yarick's Gym in 1949 when he visited the west coast during his 6 months trip to America. So he must have met Doug Hepburn and Steve Reeves who were training there. Park actually competed against Reeves for the Mr Universe title in 1950 and lost to him. So while I haven't been able to find proof that Reg Park learned the 5x5 method from Doug Hepburn (and I frankly

don't really care who invented this method either), it is possible that this was the case.

What is sure is that Bill Starr popularized the 5x5 method years later in his book *The Strongest Shall Survive* (1976). Starr was the Olympic Coach for the Baltimore Colts when they won the Superbowl in 1970, the strength coach of several universities including Hawaii, Maryland and John Hopkin, and national record holder in Powerlifting and Olympic lifting. Starr called his training strategy "*The Big Three*" but if you looked at it closely this was the good old 5x5 method Reg Park had published almost 2 decades before him.

27 years later, in August 2003 I lost at armwrestling to some guys during my holiday in Turkey (read page 16). Humiliated, I researched how to boost my strength once back in Belgium. There was a guy nicknamed "*John Smith*" on this forum whose training method revolved around 5 sets of 5 reps of Squats, Deadlifts, Rows and Presses. No isolation exercises, no high reps, no failure training. Just adding weight to the bar progressively. The premise: gain strength and muscle training only 3x/week. I was training 5x/week!

This John Smith guy later turned out to be Olympic Coach Glenn Pendlay MS USAW who has so far produced 97 national champions ... whose athletes have broken 20 American records and won 20 medals in international competitions ... who has Squatted +800lbs, Deadlifted +700lbs, Bench Pressed +500lbs ... and who has a master in Exercise Physiology with a concentration in endocrinology through the Kansas State University ... and who has published articles in several peer reviewed journals.

This 5x5 method looked good on paper, but I was skeptic – it just sounded too good to be true. Frankly, I was convinced that you need isolation exercises like biceps curls and calf raises to "shape" muscles because that's what I had done for 5 years. And I was also afraid that I'd lose the physique I had built if I would do compounds only, especially since the 5x5 method didn't call for high reps which I believe were crucial for "definition".

The other thing was the whole idea of Squatting 3x/week. I was one of the few guys in my gym to train my legs. My mentor had introduced me to Squats in January 2000 and I had done them every single week ever since. But to me the idea of Squatting 3x/week was just crazy. I knew how brutal training legs was, I often had sore legs for 7 days. Squatting 3x per week was asking for overtraining, I believed in training 1 muscle per week max.

So I dismissed the 5x5 method and did other stuff.

The turnover happened in March 2004 when I got kicked out of the gym where I trained at for 5 years (partly my fault, partly gym politics). I eventually found a new gym which had a Squat Rack. It was \$15,00 per month more expensive and further from my place than my previous gym but since I needed to train somewhere, I joined in April 2004.

Yet I never felt home there. This was a much more commercial gym than my old one. They didn't have any Olympic barbells but smaller 30lbs bars without middle knurling, with fixed sleeves and which already bent at 250lbs. Their 45lbs plates weren't Olympic ones with a 17" diameter, but those small ones. Try to Deadlift like that. It sure frustrated me.

3 months later I saw on a dutch training forum pictures of this guy's new home gym. Back then, there weren't any stores selling Racks in Belgium, so I was stunned when I saw this guy had a Power Rack. I discovered I could get a full setup for \$2500 (NOTE: it's way

cheaper today a friend of mine bought the same setup last year for less than \$1000). It was a big investment, but I knew that I'd get my money back within 3 years by saving on gym fee and fuel driving back & forth. Add all the time I'd save and freedom I'd gain. I ordered my home gym which I installed in my parent's garage where I still train today.

The only problem was that I no longer had access to machines or cables now that I was training at home. So I looked for a routine that would fit. This brought me back to the 5x5 method I had discovered through Glenn Pendlay exactly 1y earlier. Now I was still skeptic, but I had no options. I also figured that if I could build this body once, I could do it again so I had nothing to lose. I remember considering going to the commercial gym 1x/week to hit my chest and arms with isolation exercises if I would ever lose definition or "shape"...

Well that never happened. To my own amazement, I didn't lose any size or definition on my arms or chest after I started to focus on strength using the 5x5 method. I actually started to look stronger, denser than before which is what Arnold meant (page 16). My physique also became more balanced: my triceps, shoulders and upper-back which had always been lagging finally started to catch up. I never overtrained from Squatting 3x/week and my nagging lower back and shoulder pain, that I accumulated from overemphasizing certain body parts with those imbalanced routines for years, finally vanished.

But the best part was really that I was saving an incredible amount of time. I went from training 5x/week for at least 2h/day to training only 3x/week for about 1h. That meant I was now saving at least 364 hours of gym time or 15 days per year. I now had more time to have a life outside of the gym (friends, hobbies, family) WHILE getting better results than I had ever had before AND without all that painful failure training and sore legs.

I obviously never went back to bodybuilding after this. And when my friends now came to me for training advice, I gave them the 5x5 method. I quickly discovered that a major mistake everybody made, including myself when I first started, was to start way too heavy. The result: extreme soreness from Squats which in some cases lead to missed workouts in week 1, and in most cases lead to stalling too early and losing motivation as a result.

To prevent guys from quitting the program because of their own ego's getting in the way, I added my own twist to the 5x5 method: enforcing starting with the empty barbell. This eliminated the issue of starting too heavy, allowed them to focus on technique rather than weight, and eliminated all questions regarding how much weight they should start with. You no longer needed to calculate your work weight based off your 1RM that you may not even know anyway, you just start with the empty bar and progress from there, done.

Most important: since you're starting light, you can add weight each workout for a long time without stalling, which obviously increases motivation. Success breeds success: you see the weight increase each workout so you know the program is working and that keeps you going and even crave for more. This is the reason why almost nobody ever skips a workout the first 12 weeks when approaching the 5x5 method using the empty bar strategy that I came up with. And when you know that consistency is the real secret to LONG LASTING success, not missing a single workout early on is invaluable.

StrongLifts 5x5 was born.

Who Else Wants to Make Money Quick And Easy, Sitting At Your Kitchen Table, In Your Underwear?

Okay, I do not work from my kitchen table in my underwear because that's not my style, but I could if I wanted. I'm writing this from my apartment not so far from Brussels, sitting at my desk in my sport pants and a T-shirt, where I have made tens of thousands of dollars during the last several years. I have achieved the “fantasy” of making a ton of money from a home-based, easy, pleasant business doing something that I'm passionate about.

There's nothing really special about what I do and I honestly believe that you could do it too if you wanted. Heck, it would probably be easier for you because English isn't even my primary language (French is). Now I can understand if all of this may sound hard to believe because, frankly, if you would have told me 5 years ago that I would become the most expensive strength coach in the world, reaching 15-million of guys through my website in only 3 years, I think I would have laughed in your face – but here I am.

It still amazes me today that I didn't think earlier of making a living with everything I knew. Here's why: you'd probably never guess if you'd see me, but I'm a bit of a nerd – I studied IT and just like Bill Gates I'm a college dropout. I quit my studies in my 2nd year and then landed a job in “Corporate Belgium”. Good pay, many benefits, stable contract, large company with 20k employees, guaranteed to have a good pension later and damn fine colleagues who turned into close friends that I still see today.

Why would I give all of that up? It was this mindset of wanting to improve at the gym that had gotten into other areas of my life. I grew dissatisfied with my job: I was working like a robot doing the exact same thing each day, wasn't learning anything new and felt as if I was getting dumb and dumber by the minute. I didn't like just “getting by” - I felt I could do more with my life than what I was doing and craved for some sort of challenge.

All my attempts at promotion failed largely due to dumb corporate politics. I felt “stuck” and started to hate my job. Imagine having to commute 2 hours each day, working shifts and weekends, being forced to work harder every year, not being appreciated for all of this, getting a silly \$75,00/year salary increase in return, but then having to give back 57.3% (Belgium is one of the top 5 countries in the world with the highest income tax thanks to those damn socialists). That was my life for 5 years.

I didn't want to wait until 65 to have fun. I wanted to be free to work when I wanted and how I wanted. Most important – I wanted to be rewarded for working hard. So rather than letting myself get depressed or waiting for someone to knock on my door to make my life better, I decided to take control over my own life – I started seeking for an “opportunity”.

I began reading a lot, and eventually stumbled on the concept of “blogs” in August 2006. I had never heard of blogs before, but I liked the concept of making a living by helping people to solve their problems. After all, this is what I had been doing as a tech support since 2002, so I had the skills. The only thing I needed was a topic to blog about...

7 months later I met my mentor at a party, the guy who introduced me to Squats in 2000 and who had taken me under his wings for 2 years. I told him that I wanted to start a blog and then quit my job, but that I had no idea which topic to blog about. My mentor replied:

“You should make a blog about weight training”.

It was as if a light bulb had gone on. But I didn't say anything and stubbornly continued my explanation because I thought this was a bad idea. There were too many websites on weight training already and – most important - who am I anyway?

And yet, I couldn't get the idea out of my head the weeks after. But I could also not convince myself to do it because I just didn't think this had a chance to work. Most people said I shouldn't do it because I had a good job in a stable company, earned well and was guaranteed to have a good pension later. If I quit, I would most likely never find a job like this again. Some people told me to go for it because I had no debt, no wife, no kids. I had nothing to lose, only to win. And if I could make this work, I'd be making a living doing something that I'm passionate about, working when I want and how I want.

I took me a while to realize that there was no other website that explained how I trained. Every single one of them advocated those silly bodybuilding split routines where you have to train 6x/week doing 27 isolation exercises per workout, taking each set until failure so you get pumped and sore, and take a load of expensive supplements on top of it to get results. It was all a confusing, complicated, an unorganized mess ran by snake oils.

This is what convinced me to create a website about strength training, free of all the B.S. and clutter and with a definite standardized approach. I didn't just want to make the very best website in the fitness niche, I wanted to make the best one in the world. Everything under one roof, a place that I wish existed when started training, that would have saved me a lot of time and effort, and that would have shortcut my success.

It was obvious I should do this. And so 2 weeks later I registered the domain “StrongLifts” and set as deadline May 1st 2007. The site went online on that date as planned, I wrote my first article on the desk next to my bed at my parent's place. I had frankly no idea what the hell I was or should be doing, but I figured that if I would apply what I had learned from lifting weights – persistence – that I would eventually get where I wanted to be.

May 13th 2007 I resigned. StrongLifts.com wasn't making any money yet, but I was fed up with my job. 5 years was enough. I lost all source of income and went broke for more than a year. Most of that time I spent in that little room at my parent's place, working like a madman 85 hours a week, without any kind of social life. Not a day at the beach.

Yet I'd do it again. As I write this we're a couple of days away from 2011. It's been now 3,5 years since I founded StrongLifts.com which quickly established itself as the number 1 strength training resource in the world – 15-million guys reached in only 3,5 years, and more than 20,000 StrongLifts Members from more than 187 countries. I obviously make a lot more money now as a small business owner than when I was employed and I have my own place, but that's not that important for me. What is important is that I work when, how and how much I want WHILE doing something that I love. That's why I'm still often working 70h/week: I really, really, really like what I do and I would do it all for free if we didn't live in a world where you have to pay bills and taxes.

My journey with StrongLifts.com has been similar to my weight training journey: starting out clueless, doing a lot of dumb mistakes as a result, yet persisting until I got where I wanted (and I'm just getting started really). If bad genetics held me back as a lifter, English

not being my primary language held me back as an entrepreneur. 5 years ago I couldn't even write a grocery list, it took me tens of thousands of hours of writing to get to the level where I am today. And I really wished I would have had someone to guide me on my way, it would have shortcut my success. Maybe one day I'll be teaching that too.

Now all that bragging has a point - why the heck has StrongLifts.com become so popular, so fast? Obviously, it's because my methods work. I truly have a system that can change not just your body, but your life. And I can, and will, prove it to you.

WARNING

Yes, a warning: the method you're about to discover is going to be radically different from anything you've seen before. You will be skeptic. You will be tempted to instantly reject it. You will find it contrary and challenging to what you've been taught and may have done before. You will wonder where the frigging arm curls, ab crunches and calf raises are. You will be tempted to add exercises to target these body parts. You will also be tempted to do 3x8 instead of 5x5 so you achieve more "definition," even though I stressed in this report that muscle size is directly related to strength gains and that definition is fat loss (diet).

You will also underestimate this method. You will think that 3 exercises per workout is not enough. You will want to add exercises and train more than 3x/week. You'll be tempted to start with more weight than just a silly empty bar. I warn you, 5x5 does look easy on paper, but I assure you it will turn extremely challenging as you progress.

To avoid missing out on an incredible opportunity to transform your life for the better, you need to patiently and carefully consider this training method that will at first seem dead wrong, illogical, irrational and unreasonable to you. And remember what Napoleon Hill, author of the bestseller *Think & Grow Rich*, said...

"Neglecting to broaden their view has kept some men doing one thing all their lives".

To encourage you, I want you to keep 3 important things in mind. One, I was the biggest 5x5 skeptic ever. 5 years of bodybuilding split routines had brainwashed me into this idea that you need isolation exercises for 3 sets of 8 reps until failure to gain muscle. I couldn't believe that I would be able to Squat 3x/week, and that's why it took me a year to try this. A full year. Luckily I gave it a try and it completely transformed my body and life.

Two, the 5x5 method is proven to work. This strategy was used by Reg Park and Arnold Schwarzenegger to build their world class physiques and strength. It was used and is still being used by Glenn Pendlay MS USAW with his world class Olympic athletes who have won gold medals and broken American records. This method is almost 70 years old and there are tens of thousands of success stories proving that it works. A few dozens of them are in this report for you to examine. I could actually have included hundreds of these success stories but I wanted to keep the length of this report within reasonable size.

Three, the most important one, is that the only real way to find out if this method works, is by giving it a honest try for 12 weeks. We can talk a lot about why this method works, but at the end of the day the proof is in the pudding. You got to actually try it to believe it.

Give Me 12 Weeks And I'll Give You The Kind Of Body And Strength You Always Wanted

Here's what I want you to do: test-drive my StrongLifts 5x5 program exactly as laid out for 12 weeks and then you can judge for yourself whether this program really works or not. I'm extremely confident that you will gain muscle and strength because tens of thousands of guys, from all sorts of backgrounds, bodytypes, genetics and ages, did with this program.

StrongLifts 5x5 is split into 2 full body workouts for a total of 3 sessions per week. The first time you go to the gym you do workout A, the next time workout B. You then alternate workout A and B every time you go to the gym for a total of 3 sessions per week. Here's how the two StrongLifts 5x5 workouts look like:

StrongLifts 5x5	
Workout A	Workout B
Squat	Squat
Bench Press	Overhead Press
Barbell Rows	Deadlift

3 exercises per workout doesn't look like a lot, but remember it's not about the amount of exercises, it's about the intensity of your training – and that will increase fast as I'll explain in a moment. Frankly, you'll eventually be happy that there are only 3 exercises because you'll be toasted just after doing your heavy Squats. Keep also in mind that these are full body exercises – your arms will not remain skinny, they'll increase in size (proof follows).

Important: you never EVER do Stronglifts 5x5 two days in a row because your body needs recovery to gain muscle and strength. If you do make this mistake anyway, then you won't be able to add weight each workout. Always wait at least 1 day before doing a StrongLifts 5x5 workout again. Most StrongLifts Members train Mon/Wed/Friday, like this:

StrongLifts 5x5 Week 1		
<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Workout A	Workout B	Workout A
Squat	Squat	Squat
Bench Press	Overhead Press	Bench Press
Barbell Rows	Deadlift	Barbell Rows

Notice how the workouts A and B alternate every time you go to the gym. Notice also how the exercise order is always the same – you're always doing Squats first, then Bench or Overhead Press, and then Barbell Rows or Deadlifts. You do NOT start with the Bench Press because Squats are the most important exercise of StrongLifts 5x5.

Unlike week one, your second week of StrongLifts 5x5 will start with workout B because you ended your first week with workout A. Here's how week 2 looks like:

StrongLifts 5x5 Week 2		
<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
Workout B	Workout A	Workout B
Squat	Squat	Squat
Overhead Press	Bench Press	Overhead Press
Deadlift	Barbell Rows	Deadlift

You now understand what I mean when I say to alternate workout A and B each session. This isn't rocket science: week 3 is exactly like week 1 and week 4 is exactly like week 2. The only difference is that the weight you'll be using in week 3 and week 4 will be much higher than in week 1 and 2. I will explain that in a moment too.

All these exercises you must do with free weights, using an Olympic Barbell. This means you don't use machines or the smith. Here's why: barbells force you to balance the weight yourself and allow for natural movements. On the other hand machines/smith balance the weight for you (which means less muscle and strength gains) and force you into fixed, unnatural movement patterns that can cause knee, lower back and shoulder pain. You also don't use dumbbells because you can lift more weight with a barbell. More important is that you just can't do heavy Squats with dumbbells, you need a barbell for that.

You'll do 5 sets of 5 reps (5x5) with the same weight on every exercise after you've done your warm-up sets. There's 1 exception, Deadlifts, where you'll only do 1 set of 5. Here's why: 5x5 or even 3x5 Deadlifts would mess with your recovery and cause stalling because you're already doing 5x5 Squats 3x/week. I urge you to stick with 1x5 Deadlifts.

StrongLifts 5x5 Sets & Reps	
Workout A	Workout B
Squat 5x5	Squat 5x5
Bench Press 5x5	Overhead Press 5x5
Barbell Rows 5x5	Deadlift 1x5

Never jump straight into your work weight, warm-up first. As an example, let's say your work weight for the Squat is 135lbs. Then here's how your training would look like...

- 2x5 45lbs => 2 sets of 5 reps with the empty Olympic bar
- 3 x 90lbs => 1 set of 3 reps with the 45lbs bar + 22.5lbs/side
- 5 x 135lbs => first set of 5 reps with your work weight
- 5 x 135lbs => 2nd set of 5 reps with your work weight
- 5 x 135lbs => 3rd set of 5 reps with your work weight
- 5 x 135lbs => 4th set of 5 reps with your work weight
- 5 x 135lbs => 5th and final set of 5 reps with your work weight

Always include the weight of your barbell. Olympic barbells weigh 45lbs. If your bar weighs less, you should add weight to get to 45lbs. I urge you to get access to a real Olympic bar: you'll be able to lift heavier weights because of the revolving sleeves which are also easier on your wrists and shoulders, the bar won't bent with heavy weights, and it's just safer.

You also need access to a Power Rack so you can Squat heavy and in all safety. There's simply no safe way you can put a 300lb bar on (and off) your upper-back without a Power Rack. Squat Stands (with saw horses) are the next best thing. The smith machine is NOT because it forces your body into fixed movement patterns and balances the weight for you. This means it can get your lower back and knees injured, doesn't build real world strength, and is less effective for muscle gains than Squatting with free weights..

You should take about 1min rest between your work sets. As the weight on the bar increases and you start struggling to get 5 reps on each set, start taking up to 5 mins rest between sets, this can make the difference between getting 5 reps or not on your next work sets. Prevent your workouts from getting too long by not taking any rest between your warm-up sets – just load the bar then do your next set. But stay focused.

How fast should you lift? As fast as you can on the way up, controlled (but not slow) on the way down. Lifting fast is not cheating, and it's definitely not dangerous if you use proper technique. If you lift fast on the way up you'll be able to lift more weight than if you lift slow. Do not listen to those idiots saying lifting slow is better – yes it is challenging, but muscle size is directly related to strength gains. You get stronger more quickly by lifting fast. So lift as fast as you can once you get a hang on the proper technique.

After your 5 sets of 5 reps on Squats are over, you move the next exercise, the Bench or Press depending on whether it's workout A or B. After this you move to Rows or Deadlifts. This means you do NOT do that silly circuit training mixing one set of Squats with one set of Presses and then one set of Rows. Your goal is NOT to get exhausted, your goal is to add weight on the bar every workout. And the best way to accomplish this is to do every exercise, set, and rep with 100% focus, NOT by rushing through each exercise in an attempt to get out of breath or sweaty. Remember: this is a strength program.

Stick to the exercise order, it isn't random You Squat first because it's the most important exercise. You then move to the Bench/Press so your legs and lower back get a break. And then you move to Rows/Deadlifts which work your posterior chain again. Sticking to the same exercise order allows you to track progress more efficiently because no variable is changing except the weight on the bar (sets/reps/exercises/order remain constant).

Notice that on the Deadlift you only do 1 set of 5 reps, not 5x5 or 3x5 because that could cause stalling when combined with 5x5 Squatting 3x/week. So let's say your work weight on the Deadlift is 225lbs, here's then how it would look like:

- 5x 135lbs => 1 set of 5 reps, 1st warm-up set
- 5x 175lbs => 1 set of 5 reps, 2nd warm-up set
- 5x 225lbs => 5 reps with 225lbs, your work set

1x5 Deadlifts doesn't look like a lot, but as you can see – you have your warm-up sets, so you're actually doing more. And as you'll also experience in the coming months, once the weight becomes heavy, you'll be happy to end your training with only 1 set of 5 Deadlifts.

“They All Laughed When I Started With The Empty Barbell, But Their Laughter Changed to Amazement When They Saw Me Squatting 225 Pounds 12 Weeks Later!”

The biggest StrongLifts 5x5 mistake you can make is starting with weights too heavy. Most guys care way too much about what other people in the gym (or anywhere else actually) are thinking. The temptation is therefore huge to start with heavier weights to show off, but it's also a huge roadblock to your own success and a guaranteed way to fail the program.

The problem with starting too heavy is that it can get you extremely sore – especially from Squats. Ironically, the fastest way to eliminate soreness is to train sore muscles again by going to the gym anyway. But many guys will ignorantly skip the next workout or even the next 2. This is a huge problem because consistency is the real secret to success, and you don't develop this asset by skipping workouts early on. In some cases missing sessions during the critical first 3 weeks becomes the beginning of the end. I'm sure you've heard that it takes 21 days to build a new habit. Well the first 3 weeks of StrongLifts 5x5 are designed to do that – to make you build the habit of exercising. This is consistency.

More important to you is that on StrongLifts 5x5 you'll be adding weight on the bar every workout anyway, boosting your work weight by 60lbs per month on the Squat. If you start too heavy, you won't be able to achieve 5 reps on all 5 sets in week 3 (or even 2), lose motivation as a result, and that is again the beginning of the end.

This is why I say: **it's better to start too light than too heavy**. Heck, they may all laugh when they see you start with that empty bar, but when you're Squatting 225lbs for sets of 5 only 12 weeks later, their laughter will change to amazement. How many guys do you see Squatting 225lbs in your gym? Not much. Yet you can accomplish this strength feat in only 12 weeks by starting with the empty barbell and adding 5lbs each workout. I therefore urge you to start with the empty Olympic barbell on the Squat, Bench and Overhead Press. It may feel too light at first, but this will allow you to practice correct technique.

On the Deadlift and Barbell Row you should start with 95lbs/65lbs respectively since you can't perform these lifts without weight on the bar - proper technique means the bar rests on the floor at the start of and between each rep. Use plates with 17" diameter so you have the correct bar height. If you don't have light plates with this diameter, put two 25lbs plates flat on the floor below the bar to raise the bar so the bar is about 9" off the floor. By the way, if your gym doesn't have round plates like in the picture on the right, switch gym. You can't Deadlift/Row correctly with octagonal plates.



Put 2 plates flat on the floor when starting with small plates so you get the right bar height for Deadlifts and Rows like on the right.

If you can't do Barbell Rows correctly with 65lbs, start with the Inverted Row. No weights required here, just do as many reps as you can on each set, starting with both feet flat on the floor if you can't do them with straight legs and always trying to beat your previous record, until you can do 3 sets of 12 reps— then you move to Barbell Rows 5x5.

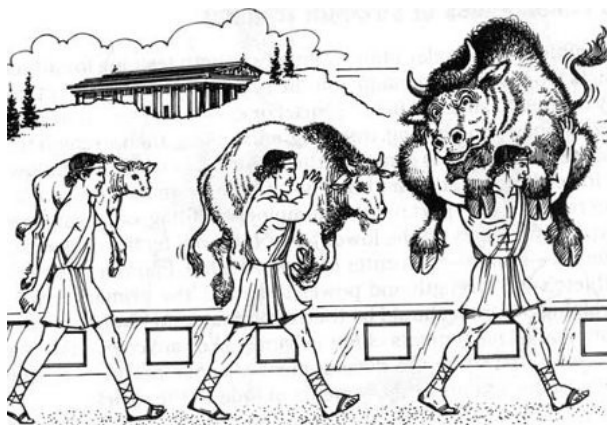
If you have been lifting weights during the past months then starting with the empty barbell may feel too light. My advice remains though: it's better to start too light than too heavy. Avoid soreness, avoid early stalling, and spend some time mastering technique on all the lifts. If you want to start heavier anyway, then start with 50% of your 5RM. So if your max Bench Press is 5x220lbs, you should start with 110lbs for 5x5. That will still be fairly light, but remember you'll be adding 5lbs per workout, and so you'll be Benching 190lbs for sets of 5 reps within 12 weeks. Every single guy who does StrongLifts 5x5, even the ones who have been lifting for years already, set new records on this program. Gains will come fast if you're patient. Starting too heavy doesn't make you progress faster, it hurts gains.

Amazing Secret Discovered By Greek Wrestler Adds Over 100 Pounds To Your Lifts Every Month And Super-Charges Your Motivation

What is the best way to measure if your training program yields results? You already know muscle size is directly related to strength gains. Thus, if your training makes you stronger, you know you're gaining muscle. So the simplest way to measure the effectiveness of your training program is by measuring if the weight on the bar increases over time or not. So I cannot B.S. you here – you will quickly know whether StrongLifts 5x5 works by just looking at the progression in weight on the bar. If it goes up – which it will – the program works.

The large majority of guys who do StrongLifts 5x5 will never ever miss a workout during their first 12 weeks trial. What I keep hearing is that they look forward to going to the gym again and are incredibly motivated. This is of course because with StrongLifts 5x5 your work weight increases every single workout, so you know you're making progress by just comparing the weight you're lifting today vs last workout. This is the easiest way to boost your motivation – seeing results – because success breeds success. No bullshit with “pump” or “soreness”, you're either lifting more or you're not. And if you do, it's working.

There is another important reason why you need to increase the weight every workout: it's crucial for strength gains and thus muscle building. The legend goes that in Ancient Greece, the wrestler Milo of Croton, trained for strength by carrying a new born ox daily. As the calf grew bigger and heavier, Milo got progressively exposed to more weight, which forced his body to grow stronger and more muscular. Milo eventually became one of the strongest guys of his time, eventually winning the Olympic Games 6x.



This may be only a legend, but the moral of the story is that to gain strength you need to add weight. Why would your body develop the strength to Squat 300lbs if you never Squat 300lbs? You must lift heavy weights to get stronger and gain muscle as a result.

This training strategy of adding weight systematically I call **Progressive Loading** and it is key to all the training programs in the *StrongLifts Ladder of Strength* (page 48), including StrongLifts 5x5. Just like Milo, you'll start light and add weight progressively. You do not lift

the same weight workout after workout, week after week, month after month. Guess what: this would actually make your body WEAKER. Maybe you've been in a situation where you suddenly can't bench the weight that you can normally bench easily. Well now you know why: if you always lift the same weight, your body becomes lazy and you lose strength.

Obviously, I'm not going to make you carry a newborn ox daily like Milo did, you'll just use barbells and add 5lbs to the bar every workout. Here's how the first week of StrongLifts 5x5 looks like when you start with the empty barbell as I recommend you to do...

StrongLifts 5x5 Week 1		
<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
SL5x5 Workout A	SL5x5 Workout B	SL5x5 Workout A
Squat 5x5 45lbs	Squat 5x5 50lbs	Squat 5x5 55lbs
Bench Press 5x5 45lbs	Overhead Press 5x5 45lbs	Bench Press 5x5 50lbs
Barbell Rows 5x5 65lbs	Deadlift 1x5 95lbs	Barbell Rows 5x5 70lbs

All those weights are including the weight of the bar which weighs 45lbs if it's an Olympic one – the one you should be using for maximal strength, comfort and safety. You can see how the weight increases every workout by 5lbs on every exercise. Deadlifts are here – again – an exception: you'll be adding 10lbs per workout instead of 5lbs. Here's why: if you only add 5lbs per workout, this totals for 30lbs/month vs. 60lbs/month on Squats. So your Deadlift would be lower until you start stalling on Squats while it's supposed to be higher. So add 10lbs on Deadlift each workout like this...

StrongLifts 5x5 Week 2		
<i>Monday</i>	<i>Wednesday</i>	<i>Friday</i>
SL5x5 Workout B	SL5x5 Workout A	SL5x5 Workout B
Squat 5x5 60lbs	Squat 5x5 65lbs	Squat 5x5 70lbs
Overhead Press 5x5 50lbs	Bench Press 5x5 55lbs	Overhead Press 5x5 55lbs
Deadlift 1x5 105lbs	Barbell Rows 5x5 75lbs	Deadlift 1x5 115lbs

When Deadlifts become challenging, you move from 10lbs to 5lbs increments. By the way, when I say add 5lbs on the bar, that means you add 2,5lbs on each side. Some gyms only have 5lbs plates. You could get away with adding 10lbs per workout on the Squat, but not on the Bench or Press because these exercises use smaller muscles. 5lbs plates are thus crucial. Cheapskates will glue 2 washers together. Smart guys who understand that time is money will invest in a pair of fractional plates like I own and take them to the gym.

You obviously can not add weight every single workout forever, that would be too easy. Eventually StrongLifts 5x5 will become brutally challenging, and you'll start missing reps. Do realize that most guys dramatically underestimate how long they can add weight every workout. Sometimes, you may have struggled to get 5x5 on your last workout, but then the next workout, where you use 5lbs more, turns out easier. It's weird, but it happens all the time. Remember: you're getting stronger each workout, what is challenging today will be easy tomorrow. You have therefore no idea whether you'll achieve 5x5 or not until you actually go to the gym, get under the bar, and attempt to get 5x5 with that weight.

Yet **stalling** is inevitable and part of the game. As an example, let's say your work weight on the Squat is 200lbs, you may only get 5/5/4/2/1 - 5 reps on the first 2 sets, 4 reps on the 3rd set, 2 reps on the 4th set and 1 rep on the last set. When this happens, do NOT lower the weight during your workout so you achieve 5 reps on each set. Lifting heavier weights matters more to gain strength. So you keep your work weight and try to get as many reps as you can on each set with proper technique, even if that means you only get 1 rep.

In this example, because you didn't accomplish 5x5 on your Squat but 5/5/4/2/1, you do NOT increase the weight the next workout for that exercise. Which means the next time you Squat you use 200lbs again and aim for 5 reps on all 5 sets. Things will now become challenging and the real fun is about to start. Lift fast, be focused, and take 5 mins rest between your sets to get your 5x5 with 200lbs. Make sure you're eating at least 3000 calories per day and sleeping 8h/night, it's crucial for optimal recovery. Start also wearing a Powerlifting Belt and use chalk for Deadlifts. Both will boost your strength.

2 things may happen now. Ideally, you achieve 5x5 with 200lbs this time. Congratulations, this means you increase the weight by 5lbs again the next time you do that exercise. If you do not get 5x5 for the 2nd time in a row (5/5/4/3/2 for example) – you try for a 3rd time with the same weight the next time you do that exercise. Example below:

Example Stalling on StrongLifts 5x5		
Monday	Wednesday	Friday
SL5x5 Workout A	SL5x5 Workout B	SL5x5 Workout A
Squat 5/5/4/2/1 200lbs	Squat 5/5/4/3/3 200lbs	Squat 5/5/5/4/3 200lbs

Here you didn't accomplish 5x5 with 200lbs three times in a row. Do not try a 4th or 5th time, it's bad for your confidence under the bar. Instead, **deload**: you take 10% weight off for the exercise you stalled on *only* and progress from there. So in this example, you would start the next Monday with 180lbs on the Squat and do 5x5. Focus on technique and lift as fast as you can. Then you add 5lbs to the bar every workout again. It will take you 2 weeks to get back to the 200lbs you stalled with and this time you will achieve 5x5.

Deloads are the most powerful strategy to blast through any plateau, consistently add pounds to your lifts, and gain strength and muscle. Here's how they work: the main reason why stalling occurs is that your body doesn't get recovered in time. Again: you can't add weight every workout forever, that would just be too easy. By performing a deload, your body gets extra recovery because the work weight is lower. And when you eventually no longer make progress with deloads, it's time to switch to **StrongLifts 3x5**...

Beyond StrongLifts 5x5 -- The StrongLifts Ladder of Strength

I've stressed earlier in this report that StrongLifts 5x5 is NOT a 12 week program where you try this for a while, then switch to the next "workout of the month". 12 weeks is really only the beginning – it is you testing the program and me shamelessly trying to get you hooked. Indeed, I'm confident that after your 12 weeks trial your muscle and strength gains will motivate you to continue the 5x5 training method I have introduced you to.

But StrongLifts 5x5 is obviously NOT a program that you'll do for the rest of your life. How long can you gain strength using it? Your body-weight, training experience and most important, attitude matter more than what most guys think does: genetics, age and body types. The guy who has trained before, may only make 3 months of progress. The 270lbs guy who starts with the empty bar, could make 12 months progress. The skinny guy with zero training experience, he could make 6 month progress. So 3 to 12 months is the rule.

As I've explained above, eventually you won't be able to make progress with StrongLifts 5x5 anymore. You'll be alternating too much between stalls and deloads, and making very slow progress on your lifts. The reason for this is that 5x5 Squats 3x/week eventually becomes too stressful when the weight starts to increase. My own analysis of hundreds of training logs and surveys of StrongLifts Members shows that most guys usually need to switch from 5x5 to 3x5 once they hit the 200lbs mark on the Squat.

Now before you fix on this number – many StrongLifts Members got way past that. SL Member Norman (page 180) got past 400lbs with SL5x5, okay he weighs 300lbs but he also had a heart attack before he started lifting. Myles (page 203) got past 300lbs and he broke provincial records after 1 year of training. Again, everything depends on your body-weight, training experience, and attitude. So if you're a skinny 130lbs at 6'2" and skipping workouts all the time because you're just plain lazy, you will most likely not going to get to 200lbs without stalling – you're going to need to eat more and get your act together.

Instead of fixating on that 200lbs mark, use the deloads to figure out when to switch from StrongLifts 5x5 to StrongLifts 3x5. You should switch to 3x5 after you deload 2x on a lift. This cuts the training volume by almost half and thus improves recovery. Training will feel lighter for a while, and you'll be able to add weight to the bar for a few more weeks. Do not start with 3x5 immediately as the 2 extra sets of SL 5x5 allow you to practice technique more. Everybody knows technique is the key to gaining strength and avoiding injuries, and the secret to mastering technique is to practice a lot. I'm sure you've heard the saying that practice makes perfect and perfect practice makes permanent.

Eventually you'll also no longer make progress with StrongLifts 3x5. You will here too start stalling and deloading, making little progress. Solution: switch from 1x5 after 2 deloads to plummet the volume and increase your recovery. So this actually means that there may be some exercises where you'll be doing 5x5, some where you'll be doing 3x5 and some 1x5. Usually, the Press is going to be the first exercise you'll stall on, and thus the first exercise where you'll already have switched to 1x5. Bench will be second, Squat will be third with Rows somewhere in between. Not on Deadlifts because you're doing 1x5 already. Keep in mind that bad technique can mess with the order you stall on.

After another 2 deloads on your Squat with StrongLifts 1x5 it's time to switch to StrongLifts Intermediate. This is what I call the **StrongLifts Ladder of Strength** – which as the name implies is not pick and choose, it's a ladder. And like with every single other ladder, you start at the bottom and then climb it by choosing the next program in the list as you get stronger and no longer make progress with the previous training program.

1. StrongLifts 5x5
2. StrongLifts 3x5
3. StrongLifts 1x5
4. StrongLifts Intermediate
5. StrongLifts Advanced

StrongLifts Intermediate and StrongLifts Advanced are obviously outside of the scope of this book, but you can find more information about both programs on StrongLifts.com and inside the StrongLifts Community (check page 209 for resources).

IMPORTANT: I can't stress enough how crucial it is that you start down the ladder with StrongLifts 5x5. Many guys will see the name “advanced” and conclude that because they've been training for 10 years they are advanced. The harsh truth is that these same guys often can't even Squat 300lbs. Obviously, if you can't Squat 300lbs parallel, you are not advanced at all. The term advanced relates to how strong you are, not how many years you're training. As an example, StrongLifts Member Will (page 11) has been training for not even 2 years. Yet he's an advanced lifter because he Squats 475lbs and Deadlift 500lbs. You may be training a lot longer than him, but unless you lift what he does, he's more advanced than you. The good news is that several of my Members got stronger in 12 months following the StrongLifts Methods than in 12 years doing those silly bodybuilding split routines that I also did for 5 years before I discovered about this 5x5 method.

Realize also that on StrongLifts 5x5 the weight increases every single workout. With SL Intermediate it increases once a week and with SL Advanced it increases monthly. The reason for this is that an intermediate/advanced lifter can no longer make progress by adding weight every workout, the stress of the workouts is too big. Squatting 350lbs 5x5 3x/week is obviously harder than Squatting 135lbs 5x5 3x/week. So if you want the fastest muscle and strength gains (and who wouldn't want that?) you have to start with StrongLifts 5x5. If you start with the other programs without being ready for it yet, you'll be losing time.

What about AFTER StrongLifts Advanced? First, always focus on the task at hand. Do not be one of those guys making plans for things you're not ready for yet. The bottom line is that once you're past StrongLifts Advanced, you'll have enough experience to know how to reach the next level. There are many many programs that my StrongLifts Members have done past that level and that share the same principles as StrongLifts 5x5 – free weights, compounds, progressive loading - but that are all outside the scope of this book obviously. By studying their training logs inside the StrongLifts Community you'll be able to discover for yourself what you need to do once you reach that level.

All in all, the StrongLifts Ladder of Strength is worth about 2-3 years of programming. You have right here what I believe is the most powerful training system available. It is a refined version of what Arnold Schwarzenegger and Reg Park were doing decades ago, a method that I learned from Glenn Pendlay MS USAW and that he still uses successfully with his Olympic athletes. It works – give StrongLifts 5x5 a try the very next Monday that comes.

Questions and Answers

PART III

17 Reasons Why You May Say “No” to My Offer to Give StrongLifts 5x5 A Free 12-Week Trial

As attractive as StrongLifts 5x5 is, I expect that only about 70% of the guys receiving this book will try my program. Although that's okay with me from a business standpoint, it still bothers me personally. Why? Because I wasted years doing bodybuilding split routines and really wished that someone had given me this 5x5 method a decade ago. It would have shortcut my success dramatically, saved me hours of gym time, and prevented all the injuries that I accumulated from doing imbalanced routines that favored body parts.

More important to you is that I know how much my StrongLifts Members have benefited from doing this program. I've followed their training logs, watched their amazing progress from year to present, and read their success stories. Tens of thousands each year tell me that StrongLifts 5x5 didn't just change their bodies, it simply changed their lives.

Because of this, I just hate the thought of someone not doing StrongLifts 5x5 because of some omission in my explanation. That's why over the past 3,5 years I've collected all the feedback from more than 15-million of guys just to try to figure out why you may say “no” to my free 12-week trial offer. I've also tried to remember all the reasons that kept me from trying this 5x5 method (for a full year!) back in 2003. After several hours of brainstorming, I could only think of 17 possible reasons why you may say “no”. Here they are:

“Squatting 3 Times Per Week Is Too Much”

The idea of training a muscle once per week max is prevalent within bodybuilding circles influenced by muscle magazines. Yet if you pay attention to athletes you will notice that every single one of them trains each muscle several times a week without “overtraining”. Sprinter sprint several times a week, climbers climb several times a week, weight lifters Squat several times per week. Only bodybuilders think in terms of muscle group splits.

Why do you think athletes don't punish themselves with failure training and forced reps like bodybuilders do? Because there's no way you could train that muscle again, you'd just be too sore, your muscles would never be recovered in time, and you most likely wouldn't even feel like training again because failure training is beyond painful.

With StrongLifts 5x5 you may get sore or pumped, but this isn't a requirement for muscle and strength gains. The only requirement is that you add weight to the bar. Again – muscle size is directly related to strength gain, “pump” or soreness are irrelevant. So you're not training to failure at all, you're training to success. And this is the reason why thousands of StrongLifts Members are able to Squat 3x/week, adding weight each workout, without overtraining – there is none of the failure training and forced reps bodybuilders do.

If your question is whether your legs will become disproportionate from Squatting so much. One, weight lifting doesn't make you bulky that is a myth. Your legs will get muscular but for them to get bigger you need to eat more. Remember, I Squat 400lbs and my girlfriend may often joke I have a big butt, but I wear 32” jeans because I'm only 170lbs at 5'8”.

Two, everybody is born with certain genetics that will determine how you will eventually

look like. Just examine the dozens of pictures of StrongLifts Members inside this book. They all trained the same way. Yet you try to find 2 guys with the exact same physique. This proves my point: your genetics will decide how you look. I have naturally large chest muscles but a skinny pair of calves. I got over it a long time ago, and so should you. Do NOT get caught up in that pursuit of that “perfect body” like muscle magazines are trying to brainwash you with – nobody frigging cares, no woman cares, UNLESS you care.

Some of this comes back to the fear of getting big. It's not like you're going to wake up with Tom Platz' legs after just 3 weeks of doing StrongLifts 5x5. Neither will you ever achieve the leg development that Ronnie Coleman had – this guy was using steroids.

Give the StrongLifts 5x5 program a test-drive for 12 weeks, see how your body reacts to it, and then decide whether this is a good approach or not. Everything is reversible anyway and this is truly the only way you'll ever find out if this program will work for you.

“5x5 Three Times Per Week Is Too Much”

This is bullshit piled high and stinking strong. Whether 5x5 is too much or not depends on the intensity – the amount of weight – you're using. When you start StrongLifts 5x5 with an empty barbell as I urge you to do, you're not going to “overtrain” from doing 5x5 3x/week because the weights are far too light. Eventually, yes, 5x5 will become too much but then you simply move to 3x5. And when that also gets too stressful, you finally move to 1x5. It's not rocket science and it's proven to work: hundreds of StrongLifts Members have used this approach to achieve the 400lb Squat, and several of them are inside this book.

Here's a quote from Olympic Coach Glenn Pendlay MS USAW, who has so far produced 97 national champions, 20 gold medalists and whose athletes like Caleb Ward have broken +13 American records. Glenn has a master in Exercise Physiology with a concentration in endocrinology through the Kansas State University, so he has studied how different levels of stress affect your endocrine system and how this affects your body's adaptation to the stress. He also published several papers in peer reviewed journals, and is the co-author of *Practical Programming for Strength Training* of which he wrote the programming chapters. Finally, he has deadlifted +700lbs, Squatted +800lbs, Bench Pressed +500lbs.

Obviously, he knows better than anyone else what works and what doesn't. As I've said earlier, I based my StrongLifts 5x5 program and the whole StrongLifts Ladder of Strength on how he is training his athletes, and he'll tell you he's fine with that since I give credit where credit is due all the time. You are free to contact him at <http://www.pendlay.com> to check the validity of this quote just in case you think I'm making this up.

Mehdi advocates 5 sets of 5 across, or in other words, you do 5 sets of 5 with your top weight AFTER warmup. This is aimed at complete beginners to weight training, and requires that you start with an empty bar, and add weight very slowly (5lbs/workout).

I don't think its unreasonable to say that an average male could squat 150lbs for 5 reps within 2-3 workouts. Applying simple math to this routine tells me that going from a 45lb bar to 150lbs will take 21 workouts, or 7 weeks.

Russian research tells us that rank beginners make just as much progress using 60% of

their max as they do using 80% or 90%. 60% of 150lbs is 90lbs. On StrongLifts 5×5, you will get to 90lbs in week 4. So you will spend 3 weeks learning the movements and adapting to the volume, and will be at a very result producing weight within a month. Seems reasonable to me.

On StrongLifts 5x5, when you eventually stall, it will be because as the weight gets heavier you will lose the ability to handle the high volume. You will run out of recovery capacity before you run out of capacity to make quick strength gains.

The logical way to conclude the program is to start cutting volume. When you stall with 5 sets, reset the weight, and drop to 3 sets. When you stall with that, reset the weight and drop to one set. Going from 5 sets to 3 sets, then to 1 set leads you directly into my Pendlay 5×5 program.

If your head is spinning now with 2 possible programs and questions about which is better and which you should do, let me clear things up. These 2 training programs are good, no single one is better than the other. Which one is best for YOU depends on who YOU are.

If you are completely new to weight training, really have very little idea what you are doing and no idea how to estimate your best set of 5, and have little or no access to coaching, then Stronglifts 5×5 is the better choice. It is extremely hard to screw this program up, and as you go through it you will not only be gaining muscle and strength, but you will be gaining valuable experience that will be very handy to have when you get to the more advanced programs.

If you have some training history, some idea of what you can do and how your body reacts to training, or if you have access to good quality coaching, you might be better off to start right in on my Pendlay 5×5 program. But remember, when you choose a weight to start with, be conservative.

If you can't figure out which program to start with, pick Stronglifts 5×5 and then progress on from there. Keep in mind that if you move into Pendlay 5×5 from Stronglifts 5×5, you are not going to have 6 months of progress on Pendlay 5×5 like you might have had if you had started out on it. Some of that progress will have happened already before you started it. You will make more progress, then like usual, progress stalls and you must move on.

Maybe you wonder – but then why not start with 1x5 or 3x5 immediately since that is better for recovery? One, because if it's not better for recovery necessarily, all of that depends on how much weight you're using. Clearly, if you start with the empty barbell, as I urge you to do, there is no way you're going to overtrain doing 5x5 3x/week. And you'll eventually stall too whether you begin with 3x5 or 1x5, it's not like there will be a 300lbs difference in strength gain. This is what Glenn Pendlay means in the last paragraph above.

Two, the extra 2 to 4 sets allow for more technique practice, and everybody knows that technique is the key. 95% of StrongLifts Members never had any coach teaching them the lifts, they're completely self-taught just like I am. And the way they've mastered the lifts is through practice – practice makes perfect, perfect practice makes permanent. More sets improves technique faster and total sets, incl warm-up ones, is always higher with 5x5.

Before you start doubting StrongLifts 5x5 make sure you study the dozens of success stories at the end of this book. Then make sure you actually give the program a try for 12 weeks before believing whatever some idiot who never even did StrongLifts 5x5 claims. Opinions of people who did not do the program do not count. StrongLifts 5x5 will not cause overtraining or my thousands of Members wouldn't get strong. It works.

“You Need Isolation Exercises to Build Bigger Arms And Calves”

Do you really believe that your arms are going to remain skinny when you can Squat 400lbs? Your arms will have to work hard to keep that bar across your back. Add holding the bar during heavy Deadlifts and the pulling on Barbell Rows. Forearms also get work from holding the bar on Deadlifts and overhead when doing Presses. Combine all of that and you understand why your arms will increase in size, without doing a single curl.

As an example, consider StrongLifts Platinum Member Tom (page 76) who increased his biceps by 2,5” within weeks, without doing a biceps curl once. Instead, Tom started eating more, gained 26lbs and increased his Squat from 135lbs to 240lbs, so far. This is the real secret to bigger arms: you can not achieve an 18” biceps, no matter how much curling you do, if you remain a skinny 130lbs at 6'0”. My arms are 15” and I'll never get them bigger, no matter how much curling I do, because I only weigh 170lbs at 5'8”.

So the number one way to increase your arm size is to gain weight, and this starts with eating more and increasing your strength on the heavy compounds like the Squat and Deadlift. If you need to emphasize your arms then add 3x12 chin-ups after workout B. Chin-ups are superior to curls because they're compound exercises – and you're using your own body-weight (which is more than you'd ever curl). Switch to weighed chin-ups when 3x12 becomes easy, doing 3x5 and adding 2,5lbs each workout B. Just remember increasing your Squat matters most and that you need to eat more to get bigger arms.

Your calves will obviously grow too if you get stronger and gain weight. But calves largely depend on genetics. Even though I now Deadlift 500lbs my ankles are still only 8.7” thanks to my parents who have skinny calves. I used to do tons of isolation exercises during my early bodybuilding years to increase their size but never saw much gains from it. So one day I just got fed up with all that foolishness. Goatlegs are now my trademark, I feel comfortable wearing shorts and showing them, and I believe you should to.

You can't let yourself get brainwashed by those muscle magazines which keep focusing on developing “the perfect body”. Fact is, nobody cares whether you got a perfect body or not. The only people who do are the ones who are obsessed with their own body to start with because of that same brainwashing. A vicious circle you don't want to be part of. If you want to add calf work anyway, then add 3x12 raises at the end of workout B, but I warn you: it will almost never make a significant difference because calves = genetics.

Follow StrongLifts 5x5 as laid out for 12 weeks, measure your arms and calves when you start, then compare after 12 weeks. You will see that they both increased in size. Not by 10” obviously, but they will have grown bigger. Try it to believe it.

“You Need Ab Work to Build Six Pack Abs”

You build abs in the kitchen. Six pack abs is all about diet, there's no such thing as spot reduction – you can't lose fat locally by doing lots of situps or similar utter nonsense that idiot personal trainers will tell you to do. And keep in mind a low body fat without muscle underneath is useless: you need to build muscles first in order for them to be visible.

So step 1 is to build strong abs using heavy Squats and Deadlifts. As I write this, I haven't done any kind of ab exercise for more than a year yet I have a 6 pack that doesn't just look strong but is strong. Why? Because I Squat 400lbs. Just look at all the pictures in the front of this book of my StrongLifts Members who have 6 pack abs. You ask them how much situps they did to accomplish that, almost none. The reason why they have 6 pack abs anyway is that the primary function of your abs is to stabilize – keeping your torso upright. And no exercise trains this better than heavy Squats, Deadlifts and Presses.

While we're at it, more myth debunking. My 32” jeans are loose at my waist and that's why I always wear a belt. I could actually wear 31” jeans if it wasn't for my thighs and glutes. My point being that heavy lifting does NOT increase waist size. You won't get a gut like some bodybuilders have – that's from steroids. Further proof, several StrongLifts Members like Michael (page 144) can attest that their waist size decreased since they started lifting, even though, in many cases, their body-weight actually *increased*.

Bottom line: build strong abs first, then your diet will determine whether you see them or not. If you somehow feel a need to emphasize your abs, add reverse crunches 3x12 at the end of your workout A. When that gets easy, switch to hanging knees raises. When that gets easy, the ab wheel. Do NOT do 25 ab exercises, no need for that. 1 exercise max preceded by heavy Squats, Deadlifts and Presses will be plenty of ab work.

“You Need 3x8 for Muscle Gains And Definition”

It is a scientific fact that muscle size is directly related to strength gains. To gain muscle, you need to get stronger. And which rep range you use for that matters less than actually getting stronger. Because if you're not lifting more weight today than 6 months ago, you will not gain a single pound of muscle, no matter how pumped or sore you get with 3x8. How do you think Arnold Schwarzenegger achieved his 700lbs Deadlift? He didn't build his world class physique doing 3x8 but using Reg Park's 5x5 method.

Before you think of doing 3x8 instead of 5x5 because I just said that the rep range doesn't matter much, here are just some of the reasons why 5 reps is superior to 8 reps

- **Technique improves.** The more reps you do, the more fatigue sets in and the more your form deteriorates. Your technique improves when doing only 5 reps vs 8. And proper technique is critical for strength development and thus muscle gains.
- **Speed Increases.** You can lift faster when doing only 5 reps than when doing 8 reps because speed obviously decreases as you do more reps. Lifting fast isn't cheating like those slow lifting advocates claim, it allows you to lift heavier weights.
- **Strength Increases.** Because you can lift faster with better technique, and because it's easier to add weight each workout when you only do 5 reps vs. 8. So you will gain strength and thus muscle faster as a result.

If you're a skinny 130lbs at 6'0” looking for “bulk”, the rep range you use is again irrelevant.

Bulk is diet, caloric excess. Which means you have to eat more than your body burns to get bulky. 3x8 is just a waste of time if bulk is your goal.

Definition on the other hand is diet. Don't buy into that metabolic workouts hype claiming faster fat loss. HIIT is overrated, and at the end of the day most guys simply don't have the time to burn significant calories through exercise – it will have to come from your diet in the first place. So the good news is you don't need to do all that painful and boring cardio, you just need to eat less crap and more healthy foods, without being anal about it. Increasing your strength will increase your muscle mass. This will automatically decrease your body fat and thus your muscles will become “defined”. High reps have nothing to do with that.

One warning. I've seen guys accomplishing amazing results with StrongLifts 5x5, but who then switched to 3x8. This is a mistake on 2 fronts. One, it goes against my revolutionary principle “don't fix it until it's broke”. Why change what works? Two, for the 37th time now, muscle size is directly related to strength gains. You can lift more weight for 5 reps than for 8. If you switch from 5 reps to 8 reps, your work weight will decrease and you're removing the muscle building stimulus. The result: muscle loss – you're shrinking.

Test-drive StrongLifts 5x5 exactly as laid out for 12 weeks and you'll see that you will gain muscle by increasing your strength on all the lifts. 3x8 is unnecessary, and it's definitely not how top bodybuilders like Schwarzenegger, Park or Coleman built their physique.

“Three Exercises Per Workout Is Not Enough”

It's not about the amount of exercises you do, it's about the intensity. It would be better if I didn't tell you this, but most StrongLifts Members will confess that they were often toasted after their Squats, and that they were happy they only had 2 exercises to do after that.

Granted, when you start StrongLifts 5x5 with the empty barbell as I urge you to do, it may feel too easy. But the weight increases by 5lbs per workout, which means you'll reach the 225lbs Squat within 12 weeks. That's if you never skip a session like most guys on SL5x5. By this time the workouts will be way more challenging than when you started. Think about it: what's more challenging, a biceps curl or a 225lbs Squat? Obviously the latter.

Doing 27 exercises per workout is unnecessary, unrealistic and plain silly. Nobody can stay focused for so much time, rushing through a myriad of exercise. Most guys can't even remember what exercise was next anyway, and you can't maintain a high training intensity when doing so many exercises unless you're doing crappy isolation. More isn't better.

“Training Only 3 Times Per Week Is Not Enough”

And training more than 3 times per week doesn't make a program more effective. Less is more. Your muscles need rest to recover, grow bigger and become stronger. So does your central nervous system need recovery. If you do StrongLifts 5x5 more than 3x per week, you will be stalling all over the place. This is a 3 day program, with rest days built in for physical and mental recovery from the heavy compound exercises.

Use your off days to get your mind off to gym and to spend times with friends/family or on hobbies. If you absolutely have to do something, then use them for mobility work, soft

tissue work and technique work with 30% of your max.

If you somehow need to do conditioning work (I never do it), then do NOT add it on your off days. HIIT is way too stressful because it requires you to go all out to be effective. If you do it on your off days anyway, you'd never have any recovery and you'd quickly be stalling all over the place. My recommendation: wait until the first 12 weeks are over before you even think about doing extra conditioning work, so you have some foundation of cardiovascular fitness first. Then you can add it, but at the end of your StrongLifts 5x5 (yes that's hard but the only way), never more than 2x per week, and spread it out.

Avoid doing too much too soon, like getting into 3 different sports at once, which are usually conflicting in their nature, and which will end up getting you mentally burned. You want to be doing this for years, not just a few weeks, and consistency is crucial for this.

"I Don't Want To Squat Because I Have Bad Knees"

Then what's your plan? Struggling with bad knees for the rest of your life? You have right here the chance to finally eliminate that nagging knee pain forever. Squats are the most powerful exercise to strengthen your knees: the more you can Squat, the stronger the muscles surrounding your knees become, and thus the higher the stability of your knee joint. This actually means that if you have bad knees, you ought to be Squatting.

I've been Squatting parallel and at times even lower for almost 11 years now – from my 20s to now almost age 30 - and I never ever had any kind of knee pain. But since I didn't start with bad knees, my experience may not be relevant to you. So I'll give you actual success stories of StrongLifts Members who did start with some of the worst knees ever.

The worst case of knee pain I've ever seen is the one from Stronglifts Member Michael. Before he discovered StrongLifts 5x5 he was struggling with arthritis... in his early 20s! It was actually so bad, that his left leg was about 4cm smaller than his right one from always leaning on one side. Fortunately, Michael did not accept his condition and gave StrongLifts 5x5 a honest try. Today, he's Squatting almost 300lbs, has gained 55lbs body-weight, and is 100% free of knee pain. You can read him telling his own story on page 142.

Another example is that of StrongLifts Member Chas Maloney (page 183) who is 55y old, almost twice the age of Michael. Chas torn his ACL while playing indoor soccer during the 1980s. In 1999 he had his ACL reconstructed and in 2008 he discovered StrongLifts 5x5. Today, his knees no longer swell when playing racquetball and he never had any kind of knee issues from Squats ... even though he does them with 285lbs, again at age 55.

One more example is StrongLifts Member Harrison who injured his knee ligament during a ski crash when he was 15 (he also has scoliosis). When he discovered StrongLifts 5x5 at age 22, he still had occasional knee pain and so he was, understandably, concerned about injuring it again. Yet he gave it a try and today he can't remember the last time his knees hurt even though he's doing Squats with 310lbs. His story is at page 77.

Last example is StrongLifts Member Paul who used to train on machines like the Leg Press for years. By age 39 his knees began bothering him so much that he had to stop doing them all together. He then discovered StrongLifts 5x5, started to Squat, and today he is completely free of knee pain. An important detail: Paul Squats 545lbs below parallel,

had never done Squats before he discovered StrongLifts 5x5 in 2008, and he is 41y old! Paul is convinced that Squats are responsible for eliminating his knee pain completely. His story is on page 174.

I could go on like this, but you get it. Here you have proof from a 24, 30, 41 and 55y old representing thousands more like them, that Squats will NOT ruin your knees. One thing I have observed after seeing hundreds of guys finally eliminating their nagging knee pain, is that their biggest stumbling block is almost always psychological rather than physical – the fear of getting injured again will be your main challenge, and you'll have to conquer it.

Watch out by the way with people telling you to do half Squats instead of hitting parallel. Half Squats are NOT safer for your knees, they can actually destroy them because they cause muscle imbalances (lots of quads development, but little hams/glutes). Your body is designed to Squat below parallel. Why do you think babies naturally sit in the bottom Squat position when playing with toys? And if this was really bad for your knees, wouldn't your body be designed in a way to prevent you to Squat parallel in the first place? Indeed.



The whole “Deep Squats Are Bad”- myth is spread by gym bros who hurt their knees by doing Squats wrong, which is how the large majority of gym goers do it. I challenge you to find 10 guys in your gym who Squat with proper technique. When these guys now go get help for their painful knees, those dumb doctors wrongly conclude that the exercise was the cause instead of the bad technique. I've only met one doctor so far who recommended me to Squat parallel. Frankly, I was stunned. But then again, he did Squats. All other doctors, past and present, told me that lifting weights is bad for your health, even though the American College of Sports Medicine – the largest sport medicine & exercise science organization in the world – recommends weight lifting. The irony when these dumb doctors who were almost always fat and out of shape complimented me on my blood pressure and what else, right after they told me that lifting weights was unhealthy.

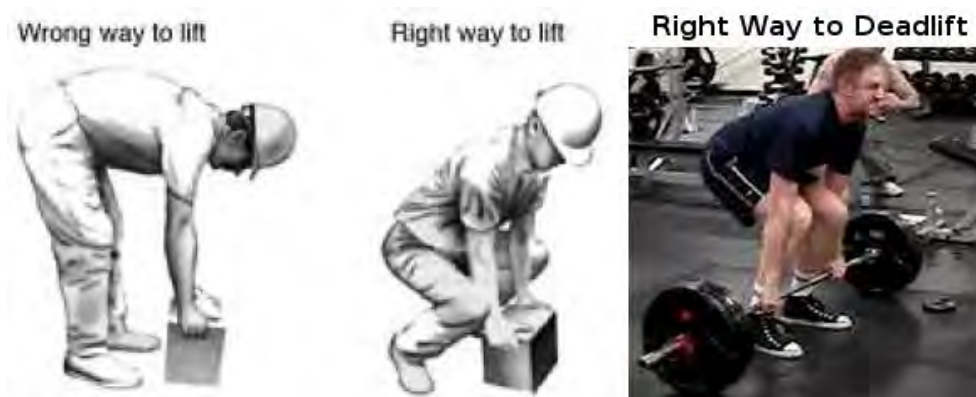
I have learned over the years to take everything these supposedly educated “health specialists” say with a grain of salt. I conduct my own research and always ask for 2nd and even 3rd opinions. As an example, in March 2009 I broke my right thumb during a fall on an icy sketch while ski-ing in Bulgaria. 6 weeks of immobilization later, I had lost 70% mobility, lots of strength and my thumb was still swelling. 2 months later, I still couldn't train, type or write painlessly. My thumb had broken at a bad place, bottom of the distal phalanx. The first doctor, an orthopedist, wanted to perform surgery – scraping the phalanx to make room for the joint to move. I knew that would be pure butchery so I refused. The 5th doctor, an orthopedist specialized in hand injuries, said that surgery wasn't necessary. I just had to be patient because it could take a full year for the swelling and pain to disappear.

We're now 17 months later. I do not have full mobility back in my right thumb and probably never will. It's also still swollen. But I do have 95% mobility now, I can hold 500lb Deadlifts, and I can write and type painlessly again. Call me biased, but I strongly believe I owe this to weight lifting. No way my thumb would have recovered like this with the usual physical therapy or, worse, just by doing nothing. And this is my point: you have to push yourself to do the work, even if it may feel painful as it was for me.

If you have bad knees, here's the secret: start with the empty bar as I keep telling you to do, take your time and focus on Squatting with proper technique. That means Squatting below parallel like Asians (my girlfriend is Chinese) and babies naturally do. You do not need to Squat as low as Olympic weight lifters do, but do keep in mind these guys Squat extremely low and heavy, almost daily, yet without having a high instance of knee injuries. Neither do my thousands of StrongLifts Member Squatting several times per week. Your biggest challenge will be mental – let pain be your guide and see how far you can go.

"I'm Afraid of Hurting My Back with Deadlifts"

The top reason why some guys hurt their lower back on Deadlifts is almost always the same reason why hundreds of guys hurt their back lifting a plain box from the floor – bad form. In fact, you can hurt your lower back way more easily doing the latter. Hundreds of guys each year suffer a hernia from repeatedly picking objects from the floor with a bent back. Pay attention to the picture below of wrong vs. right way to lift.



The guy on the right is StrongLifts Member Ben (page 120) who is now almost pulling 400lbs. You can see how his starting position on the Deadlift is exactly the same as the right way to lift an object from the floor in the middle picture. So this actually means that if you do Deadlifts regularly and with proper technique, you will dramatically reduce the risk of lower back injury from picking an object from the floor. Why? Because you will have built the habit of picking an object from the floor while keeping your back straight and while bending through your legs. Heck, you can even eliminate lower back pain.

Few examples: StrongLifts Member Harrison (page 69) used to have chronic lower back pain due to some mild scoliosis (8% curvature in lumbar). Today, 21 months after starting StrongLifts 5x5, he's only a few pounds away from hitting the 400lbs yet he claims that his lower back pain is almost completely gone. More important: nothing else had ever worked for him including extensive stretching and visits to a chiropractor.

Here's a even more dramatic story that StrongLifts Member Alex ("placasse") shared

inside the StrongLifts Community...

I was once a skinny 150 lb 6' tall weakling...I started training with full body routines in summer of 2007. After 8 months and some modest beginner gains, I wanted more. I started StrongLifts 5x5 in the winter of 2008. I went from 165lbs to 195 lbs and still had a six pack...this was over approximately 8 months. I continued to train, but with the birth of my daughter, i only really had time to squat and deadlift 2x per week.

Then in the summer of 2009, I dove into a pool. My mother told me never to dive into shallow pools, but I figured I had everything under control. Well, the worst happened and I landed on the top of my head, compressed my spine and broke my C1 vertebrae. I got out of the pool and was in a lot of pain but, being the stubborn guy that I am, refused to go to the hospital for 24 hours. Well I walked into the hospital on my own! The doctors told me I had a 30% chance of living, and a 10% chance of walking again.

After talking with many doctors and specialists, telling them about my medical history, my neurosurgeon concluded that the two years of heavy workouts and muscle building, combined with the neuro muscular connection associated with squats and deadlifts, helped my muscles to react instantly on impact, stabilizing the break and allowing me to virtually walk away from the injury. I was laid up for 8 weeks, not allowed to move, which was a killer for me. After the braces came off, I was down to 175 lbs, and I had virtually no muscle left in my neck or traps. Well, after taking more than a year off, I have gotten the doctor's permission to begin training heavy again.

Thanks Mehdi for your wonderful program. I credit your advice and my perseverance for being able to pick up my 2 year old daughter, make love to my beautiful wife, and enjoy what many of us take for granted. For anyone who reads this, remember, training isn't always about being huge, strong, or good looking. Sometimes it's just to stay alive!

Consider also StrongLifts Member Keith who was initially afraid of lower back injuries from Deadlifts because of his bodytype and age. Almost 3 years later, he's Deadlifting 370lbs at age 42 and that imaginary back injury never happened. The lesson here is that most guys fear things that in practice almost never happen. You can read his story on page 171.

Now I guess it would be better if I didn't say this, but although weight lifting has statistically the lowest rate of injury compared to any other sport, you should be cautioned that there is an inherent risk with all forms of physical activity. But like Eric Cressey MS once said...

"If you live your life the right way, you'll probably wind up in an orthopedist's office at some point. If you live it the wrong way, you'll wind up in a cardiologist's office."

From my experience training now for more than a decade, I was always injured less than my friends playing contact sports like soccer or impact sports like running. Now I have been injured, and sometimes it was pretty bad, but it was always my own fault – ego, bad technique, bad posture, lack of hip/thoracic mobility. I strongly believe that my desk job, first 5 years working as an employee and now 3,5y working from home doing StrongLifts full time, is way more dangerous than doing heavy Squats and Deadlifts.

Truth is, every single exercise is bad for your back if you do it wrong. But Deadlift with proper technique and you will build a strong, healthy lower back. So the secret here is to

start light so you can actually master proper technique. Do StrongLifts 5x5 as laid out for exactly 12 weeks, start light, and use proper technique. It works.

“Starting With The Empty Bar Is Too Light”

Then I have special advice that will be of interest for you. But first, I'm going to assume 2 things. One, that you actually have performed all the exercises of StrongLifts 5x5 before. Two, that you have also mastered the technique on all these lifts.

If that's your case, then you should start with 50% of your 5RM and progress from there. So if your max Bench is 5x220lbs, start with 110lbs for 5x5. That will be light compared to what you're lifting now, but remember you'll be adding 5lbs per workout, and so you'll be Benching 190lbs for sets of 5 reps within 12 weeks. And remember: you have to Squat again 2 days later, so you do not want to get extremely sore from starting too heavy. You also do not want to stall in week 2 already, as this would completely demotivate you and ruin the whole program. Always start way lighter than your current max.

If the progression is too slow to your liking, add 10lbs per workout instead of 5 (Deadlifts: 20lbs instead of 10). Do realize that this means you'll add 120lbs to your Squat per month, and 60lbs to your Bench/Press. Obviously, you won't be able to sustain this progression for more than a couple of weeks. Keep the progress going switching to 5lbs increments (10lbs on deadlifts, but here too 5lbs eventually) when things become challenging.

In all cases, you will achieve better strength and muscle gains if you start too light rather than too heavy. If you're confident you can handle more weight, use bigger increments to get there faster. Just remember strength training is a marathon not a sprint.

“Barbell Rows Are Inferior to Power Cleans”

Arguments can be made both ways, and discussions like this are silly. Everybody knows that Olympic Lifts, like Power Cleans, are more technical than lifts like Rows. So for faster strength and muscle gains, it makes more sense to start with Barbell Rows, use them to build a solid foundation of strength and technique, and keep the Power Cleans for later. That is if you actually have access to bumper plates and a platform, things I do not have in my home gym. This is why my quads were full of bruises from trying to catch a heavy bar after each clean so I wouldn't break my bar by dropping it on the concrete.

Barbell Rows also strengthen your upper-back, which is one of the weakest muscles of most guy's. You will never get the same kind of upper-back development from Power Cleans. Yet strong upper-back muscles are absolutely crucial for healthy shoulders and to increase your Bench Press, a lift that most guys plain suck at. The only benefit of Power Cleans is that they develop explosiveness, but if that is really your goal Louie Simmons has clearly made the case that it isn't the best lift to achieve this anyway. Simmons is by the way the only guy on earth to have Squatted 920lbs at age 50, with a 2100 total, and has worked with 25 world and national Champion powerlifters, and 27 who have totaled over 2000lbs, and even a World Record holder in the 400m dash. So I think he knows.

I recommend you stick with Barbell Rows. If you can't do them correctly or experience back pain because your posture is all over the place, start with Inverted Rows while you work on that. Meanwhile, clean your presses. So every set of Overhead Press, you clean the weight from the floor (or from the hang position) on your shoulders. This way you get the benefits of the Rows, and some of the benefits of the Cleans.

“I Don't Have Access to a Power Rack”

Put the bar on your back for Squats using the Steinborn Lift. Bar vertical on the floor, then Squat under it and drop the bar under control on your upper-back. Now Squat your 5 reps. When you're done, bring the bar to the floor by reversing the movement.

This is obviously NOT the safest method to Squat, nor will you be able to lift heavy weights this way, but at least you can test-drive StrongLifts 5x5 for a few weeks. In the long-term, it is your responsibility to find a gym that has a Power Rack so you can get the bar safely on your back for Squats. Realize also that Power Racks come with horizontal safety pins that can catch the bar in case you fail on a rep on the Squat, but also on the the Bench Press - if you miss a rep the pins will catch the bar and you won't end up stuck under it.

Lifting weights without a Power Rack, whether you have a spotter or not, is NOT safe. Nor will you ever be able to lift heavy weights on Squats. That's why I own a Rack, and that's why all my most accomplished StrongLifts Member either own one, or belong to a gym that has a one. Big chain commercial gyms may not have a Rack. Look for a powerlifting gym in your area, usually the smaller, lesser known ones. These gyms are out there, you just have to find it by asking around. If you really can't find one, consider a home gym. Power Racks start at \$350 with free shipping on Amazon. If you lack space, get Squat Stands and a pair of saw horses to act as safety pins.

“I Don't Have a Spotter”

Neither do I. I've lifted all alone, in my home gym, for the majority of the past 7 years, and I'm now Squatting 400lbs and Deadlifting 500lbs. Access to a Power Rack is much more important than access to a spotter. As I've explained above: the safety pins will catch the weight if you ever get stuck on the Bench/ Squat. Note that you do not need a spotter on the Press/Deadlift, nor should you be doing these lifts inside the rack. On the Press, you return the bar on your chest then to the floor. On the deadlifts, you just drop it on the floor.

Whatever you do, do NOT use dumbbells for the Bench Press – they're not safer than barbells. When the weight gets heavy on a dumbbell the only way to get it back safely on the floor is by throwing it. And since the total amount of weight you'll be using will be lower, the muscle and strength gains will also be lower than when using heavy barbells.

Do not listen to those idiots talking about dumbbells being better for stabilization – one, developing maximum strength beats stabilization; two, if stabilization is the goal there are better tools, like sandbags; three, barbells also strengthen your stabilizing muscles, why do you think you're shaking when you first start lifting barbells? This does NOT mean that I am against dumbbells, I have and use them, this only means that StrongLifts 5x5 is NOT a dumbbell program and does not work with dumbbells at all.

You also do not start lifting weights in the smith machine. That thing forces your body into fixed, unnatural movements. Your body doesn't move into straight up and down lines, yet that's what that smith forces you to do. It leads to lower back and knee injuries. The fact that it balances the weight for you also make it less challenging and thus leads to subpar results in muscle gains but also strength gains (you have to balance yourself in real life).

For maximal safety you just start light, focus on mastering technique, and add weight slowly but surely. As long as you use your head and don't do stupid things like loading the bar with 400lbs while you can't even Squat 135lbs properly, you will be safe.

“I'm Not In My 20's or 30's Anymore, Will StrongLifts 5x5 Work for Someone Considerably Older?”

Yes, absolutely. Strength training is actually one of the few sports where your age of little significance. Few examples:

- The world record holder in the Squat and Deadlift, Andy Bolton, is 40y old. This guy has Deadlifted +1000lbs and Squatted +1200lbs. Consider also Elite powerlifter and strength coach Louie Simmons who has done Squats with 920lbs past his 50s.
- Top bodybuilders are usually around 40 years. Ronnie Coleman won the Mr Olympia it at age 41 in 2005, and he also Deadlifts +800lbs. Same with Dexter Jackson who won the Mr Olympia in 2008 at age 39, and he Squats 550lbs.
- Some of my strongest StrongLifts Members are over 40y old. James is 42 and Deadlifts +500lbs. Nico is also 42 and he's only a few pounds away from Deadlifting 500lbs. Paul is 41 and Deadlifts over 600lbs. Norman is 44 and he Deadlifts and Squats over 500lbs (and he had a heart attack before discovering StrongLifts 5x5!)

The list goes on and on. And you'd think age would be a problem, that they'd be too old for all of that, that their slower recovery and metabolism would get in the way, that their joints and bones might not take it, but they're all doing it and putting the 20y olds to shame.

I have included inside this book the success stories of StrongLifts Member Chas and Bob (page 183 and 185). Both guys discovered StrongLifts 5x5 in 2008. Both guys never had done any Deadlifts in their life before. Yet both guys are now Deadlifting over 400lbs. The important detail: Chas is 55y old and Bob is 64. Heck, Chas had his ACL reconstructed a few years ago, and Bob won the NY State Deadlifting Championship in the Masters 60-64, Raw Amateur division last Summer 2010.

StrongLifts Member Vlad (page 155) shared that he once thought that he was too old to do what he's doing now at age 39, Deadlifting 442lbs. He obviously knows better today, but his confession reveals a mindset that a lot of guys, maybe you right now, share – they think that age is their limitation. Let's be honest: it does make a difference, but way less than most guys think. The harsh truth is that age is only a problem if you think it is.

Start StrongLifts 5x5 with the empty barbell as I recommend and add 5lbs on the bar each workout. You may have to switch to 3x5/1x5 sooner than the teenager with better recovery capabilities. Nothing wrong with that, adding weight systematically is what matters. Don't hesitate switching to 3x5 and 1x5 sooner if you feel, after having tried it first, that your body can't take 5x5/3x5 3x/week. Just make sure you hit the gym 3x/week – even doing only 1x5 3x/week will result in faster muscle and strength gains than 5x5 only 2x/week.

“Weight Training Increases Blood Pressure”

Myth. Plenty of studies have shown that weight training decreases systolic and diastolic blood pressure. Granted, your blood pressure does increase during a heavy set of Squats or Deadlifts, but it goes back to normal after your set is done. This is actually how your cardiovascular fitness improves with strength training (without having to do that dragging cardio). Instead of boring you with research, here are actual case studies from StrongLifts Members who decreased their blood pressure with Stronglifts 5x5.

First, StrongLifts Member Will (page 11) – he had borderline high blood pressure before he started StrongLifts 5x5 His doctor told him to do cardio because weight training wouldn't help. Will listened, did cardio, but didn't stick with it because obviously, cardio is boring. Why do you think they put TVs and magazines in the cardio area of each gym? Will then discovered StrongLifts 5x5, started the program and within a year his blood pressure plummeted from 138 to 100 without any kind of cardio, rather Squatting and Deadlifting.

In case you think this only applies to younger guys, consider SL Member Bob (page 185) who is 3x the age of Will – 64 years old. Like Will he had high blood pressure when he started, 138. 2 years after having done StrongLifts 5x5 his blood pressure has plummeted to 100. Again, without doing any kind of cardio, but just by increasing his Deadlift – which he does with 410lbs at age 64, while he never did any Deadlifts before. Interestingly, Bob claims that his blood pressure actually increased when he was doing cardio.

Another case, StrongLifts Member Norman (page 180) who is 44. His blood pressure was almost 150/100 when he had a heart attack prior to discovering StrongLifts 5x5. At his last checkup his blood pressure was 125/70. He hasn't been on any medication for a year, and he does Squats and Deadlifts with 500lbs. He even won his first powerlifting meet.

Many dumb doctors who are supposedly educated will claim that weight training increases blood pressure and that it isn't healthy. Yet the American College of Sports Medicine – the largest sport medicine and exercise science organization in the world – recommends it. Here's a quote from their website...

Using free weights as part of an exercise program can be a safe and effective means of improving strength and fitness for all ages and fitness levels, for men and women. They provide a stimulus for muscle-fitness development, which can increase the amount of calories you burn (body fat reduction), increase muscle size, enhance muscular strength, power and endurance, and increase strength of bones. Increased muscle strength can also have a positive impact on quality of life for older adults.

The ACSM would obviously not recommend weight training if it was bad for your health. Do StrongLifts 5x5 as laid out for 12 weeks, your blood pressure won't increase, it will increase just like it did for my StrongLifts Members.

“Weight Training Makes You Slow and Inflexible”

More B.S. Ask Belgian actor and martial artist Jean Claude Van Damme, who also won the Mr Belgium bodybuilding competition in 1978, if lifting weights made him slow for fighting and inflexible for full splits in my favorite movies of his *Bloodsport*. Even IFBB pro bodybuilder Ronnie Coleman, who weighs over 300lbs and is full of steroids, was always

doing splits as part of his posing routine for the Mr Olympia competition.

There are lot of idiot coaches who claim that you shouldn't lift weights because it will make you slow and inflexible for sports. Yet all elite teams have a strength & conditioning coach today. And all top athletes do strength training - Tiger Woods lift weights and is reported to Bench Press 300lbs, David Beckham lift weights, Kobe Brian lift weights, Usain Bolt does Squats. Look at all the football players today doing heavy lifting.

Case studies I have. StrongLifts Member Don (page 129) and Myles (page 203) both play Rugby, and they say lifting weights improved their game, and that they were less injured since they started lifting. StrongLifts Member Simon (page 135) is an ex-amateur boxer and he strongly believes that fighters should do Squat and Deadlifts. StrongLifts Member Scott (page 197) does Parkour, a sport where speed and flexibility is crucial. He believed that lifting weights would made him slow and inflexible. But here he has today, Deadlifting + 400lbs, and he's actually better at Parkour thanks to his increased strength.

Guys get inflexible from sitting on their couch all day instead of doing regular mobility work and Squats below parallel. Guys become slow from doing curls inside the Squat Rack instead of doing Deadlifts and Squats, lifting the bar as fast as they can. You do StrongLifts 5x5 as laid out, you will not get slow and inflexible. You will be faster, more flexible and you will have a definite advantage over your opponent not lifting weights.

“Weight Training Stunts Growth”

Another myth. Weight training does NOT stunt growth. Arnold Schwarzenegger started lifting weights at age 15 and he's over 6'2" tall. Lou Ferrigno, the original Hulk, started lifting at age 14 and he grew to 6' 5". Dave Draper, Mr Universe 1966, began lifting at age 10 and he was 6'0" tall. Shaquille O'Neill also began lifting in his teens and he grew 7'1" tall. Many, many famous athletes started lifting weights in their early teens.

Case studies. StrongLifts Member Jake (page 187) started SL5x5 at age 15 at 5'10". 2 years later he's 15y old, Squatting +500lbs, and 6'0". Clearly, lifting heavy weights didn't stunt his growth at all, he kept growing. StrongLifts Member Wei (page 195) started SL5x5 at age 17. 1 year later he's 1" taller even though his deadlift almost doubled to 452lbs.

If a 1 or 2" growth is not enough to convince you, check the story on page 205. This StrongLifts Member wanted to remain anonymous because it was the father posting his son's story who is only 15 y old. What matters is his growth: 5'4" at age 13 when starting StrongLifts 5x5. 29 months later, his Squat skyrocketed from an empty bar to 150kg, and he gained 33,1kg body-weight. Current height: 5'10", a 6" gain. Case closed.

Some people actually believe that weight lifting could spur growth through increased bone mineralization (this is a mere hypothesis). In all cases, how tall you'll be is in the first place a matter of genetics, and then of getting proper food when you grow up. Nothing to do about the former, but the latter you can: lifting weights encourages a healthy lifestyle.

The only way lifting weights will stunt growth is if you damage your growth plate by letting the weight fall on you. You should therefore supervise teens lifting, enforce starting with an empty barbell and discourage bad technique and ego.

50 Real-Life Success Stories

PART IV

“But My Body Is Different”

There is one more reason why some guys are hesitant to do StrongLifts 5x5 that I haven't listed yet. This is actually such a big one that I've dedicated the rest of the book to it. Here is that reason: **MY BODY IS DIFFERENT**. You may at this point be interested to start my program, but still have doubts because you've heard that *everybody is different*.

Now it would be better if you didn't tell you this, but yes, everybody is different. Genetics, body type, bone size, metabolism, length of limbs, age, etc all these things play a role. As an example, I have skinny 6.7” wrists, my thumbs overlap my middle finger when I grab my wrists. So I'm not born to be big or strong, and this is one reason why I started my journey as a 120lb weakling who couldn't do a single Push-up and who even lost at armwrestling to a girl. To add to this, I have long limbs with a short torso which works against me on the Squat/Press, and I also was diagnosed with mild scoliosis. I have flat feet and my right arm was almost dislocated when the doctors tried to get me out of my mom's womb (I weighed a whopping 5.2kg when I was born, then turned skinny). I'm sure there's more.

Yet, today I Squat 400lbs, Deadlift 500lbs and weigh 50lbs more. I do not think it was hard for me to gain weight or strength, nor do I consider myself a terrible Squatter even though I should be with my long legs. And this is my first point: I never used my limitations as an excuse to stay mediocre. I just went to the gym, did my heavy Squats and Deadlifts, and was consistent. Which brings me to my 2nd point: I did NOT train using a different program to get where I am today – I started my strength journey with the 5x5 method and still use heavy, free weight, compound exercises with progressive loading at this moment.

So yes your body is different, but no that doesn't mean you need to train differently. The StrongLifts 5x5 program uses principles which apply to anyone – whatever your genetics, body type, age, bone size, leverages, even race or gender. It is very important that you understand this and strongly start to believe it. Because if you don't believe it, there's no way you can achieve it. Napoleon Hill stressed in his bestseller *Think & Grow Rich* that self-confidence was crucial for success. Even Arnold Schwarzenegger said that *“The mind is the only limit. As long as the mind can envision something, you can do it.”*

This is what the rest of this book is about: prove you that the whole “my body is different” mindset is utter nonsense, and that StrongLifts 5x5 works for everyone. Remember this method is almost 70y old, there are thousands of success stories of guys who boosted their strength and transformed their body using this method, including Schwarzenegger, Reg Park, Doug Hepburn, Bill Starr, and maybe Sylvester Stallone and Franco Columbo. Even Ronnie Coleman was doing heavy weight works with compound exercises.

Glenn Pendlay MS USAW, who was the inspiration for my StrongLifts 5x5 program, still uses this 5x5 method today with his Olympic weight lifters who have won gold medals and broken American records. Some of his accomplished athletes include:

- Caleb Ward who has broken 13 American weight lifting records already, including a 446, 6lb Clean & Jerk record, and he's only 20 years old.
- Jon North number 1 lifter in the 94kg class in the US, member of the 2010 Pan-Am team, and only 5kg away from one of the oldest American records on the books, a 165kg snatch in the 94kg bodyweight class.

- Donny Shankle, national champion and Pan-American medalist, who snatched 172.5kg (American record) and clean and jerked 463lbs.

There's also T.J. Ward who used the 5x5 method under Glenn Pendlay's coaching to prepare for the NFL combine and draft in 2010. T.J. boosted his Squat by 50lbs in the months leading to the combine, eventually went much higher in the draft than expected (early 2nd round) and is now a standout in the defensive backfield.

You can find thousands of success stories just like these from guys who have used the 5x5 method during the past 70 years. I have included a few dozens from my very own StrongLifts Members inside this book, not for want or need of hundreds or thousands more, but in the interest of keeping the length of this report to reasonable size. The commonalities of these success stories are important and fit into two categories.

One is proof. These stories feature ordinary guys from all sorts of backgrounds, walks of lives, bodytypes, genetics, ages, heck even race, who have accomplished extraordinary physiques, strength, confidence, health, lifestyles, and positive influence on others, often while overcoming limitations, in most cases very quickly, and in some cases without any prior weight training experience. They have little in common but having done that and being StrongLifts Members. I know personally everyone you will meet in this book. Some have amazing genetics, most do not. Some are only 15y, most are 20-40y old, and one is 64y old. Some lost 100lbs, some gained 85lbs. Some were already training for 20y, others were complete beginners and never did any kind of sports in their life. Some are students, many are employed, and a few are self-employed like me. One is only 5'3", most are 5'10", and some are 6'5". Some guys were privately coached by me but most never had a coach. There's an ex-marathon runner, an ex-amateur boxer, 3 rugby players, a parkour guy, a cancer survivor, a heart attack survivor, several powerlifters, etc.

There is nothing "special" about them that you lack. Their stories are revealing of mindset, not of prerequisite qualifications. This is very important because from my experience coaching countless of guys to gain strength and dramatically change their body and life using the 5x5 method, it's been my observation that, as they start and progress, virtually all stumbling block are inside their belief system – what they think they can and cannot do, what they believe they can and cannot achieve, and how fast they think results will occur.

The other is methods. Within their stories and examples, you can find – and should look for and list – the same steps repeated, the same strategies employed. Their body types, genetics, age and backgrounds may all differ. But the way they train is the same: almost all of them started with StrongLifts 5x5 and climbed the StrongLifts Ladder of strength, and those no longer on the program are still using the exact same principles: free weights, compounds, progressive loading. You have inside this book a collection of examples that represents thousands more just like them, all using the same methods. It is here for you to see. Here for you to copy.

One of my favorites quotes ever is this: *"If they can do it, so can I"*. I want you to keep this in mind as you read their success stories. I did it, they did it, and you can do it too. This method is fool proof, test-drive it for 12 weeks and you'll amaze yourself.

“I ran into a guy I hadn’t seen in 8 or 9 months. The first thing he said was, ‘good grief man you’ve gotten swole!’”



My name is Harrison. I’m originally from Rockville, MD USA and still reside in the Washington, DC area. I’m now 24 and work in government affairs.

I’d been working out pretty consistently my whole life, either playing sports or lifting weights. I tried other workout methods like circuit training and HIIT with minimal success. I’m 5’9” and before starting StrongLifts 5x5 I was 160lbs, and pretty much “skinny fat” and unsatisfied. In the past, a typical weight lifting program went as follows: return to the gym after a couple months off, angry with myself for slacking, do some form of HIIT for about 6 months, plateau, slack off again, repeat. My earlier training did not involve squatting or deadlifting. I did some bench press, shoulder press, dumbbell curls, chin ups, dips and crunches. I didn’t turn into a weak fat man, but I didn’t turn into a strong man either.

While I was in college my house was burglarized. Another time while I was walking home some punks tried to rob me. I refused to give up any property and scared the guys off with a knife, but vowed to do whatever I could from that moment on to never be seen as a soft target again. I wondered what would have happened if I hadn’t had that little blade. I’d also strained my back moving into a new apartment. I never wanted to be so weak that I couldn’t move my own property around. I’ve always lifted, I just wanted to become bigger, stronger, healthier and more disciplined. And I wanted to do it in a safe, healthy way using a method that would work for the rest of my life. Your reasons may be different than mine. Either way we share a common goal.

So one day I googled “how to get bigger and stronger” and StrongLifts 5x5 came up. I didn’t know much about weight lifting and the 5-rep range sounded pretty low. I wondered if it would be effective. I injured some knee ligaments in a skiing crash when I was 15. At 22 I still occasionally got some pain in the knee. I knew that strengthening my legs and knee joint would help, but I was concerned that squats would aggravate the injury. I’ve also got chronic lower back pain due to some mild scoliosis (8% curvature in lumbar).

I figured as long as I was careful and took my time to learn form, I’d know if I was aggravating the issues. I decided to give it a try and after my first couple of squat sessions

I could barely walk! I was seriously sore, which I knew was a sign that I hadn't been really working out hard before, even though I thought I was. I've got a lifting mentor who told me that all the real strongmen from generations past and present use simple barbell lifts to get brutally strong. It all started making sense within a few months. Things really took off after I did GOMAD for three weeks.

Harrison's Gains	March 20 2009 (Start SL5x5)	December 7 2010 (Current SL3x5)	Gains so far...
Age	22	24	
Body-weight (5'9")	162lb	192lb	+30lb
Body fat	17%	14%	-3%
Biceps	11"	15"	+4"
Deadlift	130lb	360lb	+230lb
Squat	65lb	310lb	+245lb
Bench Press	140lb	255lb	+115lb
Press	60lb	140lb	+80lb

I started StrongLifts 5x5 March 20, 2009. I progressed steadily and did a total of two deloads all the way back down to 135 lbs on squat to improve form. I then progressed and did 10% deloads at 200 lbs and 235 lbs on squat, and then started switching to 3x5 on the exercises as I stalled for a third or fourth time. I made my last switch to 3x5 (bench) in July 2010. I'm confident my lifts will continue to go up. I'm planning to compete in a squat, bench and deadlift powerlifting meet this spring, just for fun.

My family and friends have noticed I've gotten bigger and stronger. Last month I ran into a guy at the gym who I used to work with. I hadn't seen him in 8 or 9 months. The first thing he said was "good grief man you've gotten swole!" People in the gym are sometimes surprised at how much I can lift for my size. I get compliments on squat form from some guys, others tell me I'm going to hurt my knees!



I regularly accomplish feats of strength like carrying all of my groceries up the stairs in a single trip. When I moved to a new apartment in 2009 that didn't have an elevator, just three months into StrongLifts 5x5, it was easier than when I moved in 2008. When I moved in 2010 I relished the opportunity to use my newly acquired strength.

When I started StrongLifts 5x5 my arms were 11" at the widest point of the bicep. Now they're 15", 18 months into the program. A lot of this growth came on the back of my arms from pressing and rowing. I feel I get the most work for my arms doing weighted chin ups and pull ups, and heavy barbell rows. About 4 months ago, once I was doing weighted

chins with decent weight, I added curls with a full barbell for 3×8 at the end of row day. I think it's made a difference in arm size, but probably not much. I'm up to 90 lbs on that. I don't think you should add curls until you're squatting over 300 and benching at least 200. In fact, you shouldn't modify the program at all until then. The disciplined mindset that heavy squats gives you allows you to really pump up your whole body if you add auxiliary exercises.

Since I've been doing barbell training my lower back pain is almost completely gone. Nothing else had worked before including extensive stretching and visits to a chiropractor. I can't remember the last time my knee troubled me.

The biggest mistake I made before I discovered StrongLifts 5x5 was not thinking squats are important. Squats change your entire physique. I was also afraid of eating HUGE! I've learned that if you want to be bigger, you've got to eat bigger and quit worrying about getting fat. You've got to make eating a part of your training and eat for your goal weight. Sometimes that means forcing down that extra rep from the fork to the mouth. I also learned to quit making excuses for reasons not to train. I'm sure the days I've lifted even though I felt run down, a little sick or had to work late have made all the difference.

There are so many knowledgeable Members inside the StrongLifts Community. When I was learning the lifts I got useful tips and feedback off of videos I posted within just a few hours. Other SL Members post topics and questions that get me thinking about how I can improve my own training and nutrition. Additionally, going to the board once a day or so keeps me thinking about my strength goals and reminds me to stay on track. There's nothing worse than losing all the hard work you've put in to lifting due to inconsistency.

Keeping a training log inside the StrongLifts Community lets me reflect on my workouts and look back on my progress. My log shows a clear path of progress on all my lifts and improved discipline and commitment to the goals I set for myself. I can also see how much I've learned about weight training theory and what works and what doesn't. The best way to learn what works is to go get under the bar, and looking back on my log I can see that I rarely miss workouts anymore. That certainly builds confidence in my ability to stay committed, in lifting and everything else in life. I've got a few regular followers on my log who keep me accountable. The simple social pressure of knowing I'll post my workout results online really helps when I'm dreading that next heavy squat set.

I work 10 hours/day in a suit and tie office environment. I spend most of my time completely sedentary at a desk and usually only get about 7 hours of sleep/night during the week. And I made it work. All it takes is commitment and eating big. If you've never done a real barbell strength training program before, StrongLifts 5x5 is worth a try. It's something anyone can do regardless of age or fitness level. It will help you self-actualize; you will reach your body's genetic potential if you stick with it. If you're too fat now you'll lose fat and build muscle. If you're too skinny you'll put some meat on your frame. And above all, if you're weak you'll become strong.

-SL Member Harrison aka "Maslow", 24, Washington DC USA.

“I feel more comfortable and I feel most physical challenges can be attacked with confidence.”



My name is Andreas. I am 25 years old, 192cm tall and weigh 92kg. I work full time as a software developer and have quite a busy lifestyle that comes along with working and living in a big city (Oslo, Norway).

I had a normal skinny looking physique as of May 2008 but had been sedentary for a long time throughout my college and university studies in England. I spent hours studying, gaming, and going out (beer!!). I also had a reckless diet with plenty of takeaway. After I graduated, I spent most days at work just sitting. I was therefore skinny and in poor shape for a guy in his early 20s. Not overweight, just unfit.

This basically means that my strength performance was like that of the average sedentary male: very poor. I did not have any troubling issues with my appearance though - a tall frame with broad-ish shoulders can get surprisingly skinny without looking malnourished. I just felt that I was not doing my body justice with the way I was living.

I have not been inactive all of my life. I was amongst the fastest sprinters in my secondary school and usually the fastest player playing in the local soccer games. Now this does not mean I was a big talent, but I was above average in terms of running/sprinting. I stopped playing soccer in year 2000 but because I still carried a bit of this pride with me; it was nasty to find out what 7 years of being lazy had done to my body. But really, who was I kidding? What else should I have expected?

I first realised the bad state of my fitness during the spring of 2008 when on a mountain biking trip, pulling a bike-trailer up some rocky hills. I could barely complete the task of pulling the trailer that day and was in fact very close to being sick several times during that "physical exertion". It was a true moment of enlightenment; something **had to be done**. My future flashed before my eyes at the top of the hill: I could end up as a weak computer nerd with a completely wasted athletic potential. I gave it some thought, and could not accept this potential sequence of events, I knew that right away... This was the turning point. Something changed that day.

So I ditched junkfood and computer games in June 2008 and started doing endurance training. This was the only type of training I had experience with before from playing soccer so I jumped onto the first solution was familiar with: more running and cycling.

I started to realise that I wanted power and strength, not just endurance, since I gathered I would only become skinnier than I was. I remember seeing two extremes on the internet; the sprinter vs marathon runner. Explosive performance vs. skin and bones with extreme endurance. I figured meeting somewhere on the middle would be sensible and so I introduced resistance training to my life.

By October 2008 I stopped and went for the gym instead. My ambition was not to look like some muscle-flexing superstar but to improve my physical performance. Visual changes for the better were of course welcome as an added bonus. A PT set me up with a program on machines to build strength and endurance. 3x15 reps were used, focus on back and chest mostly. Also had leg press for lower body work. I especially requested this as I figured there is no point in getting big biceps with pathetic looking and weak legs.

First sessions using machines were hard, I felt as if my muscles were bleeding after each training session. This got better fast, but I was shocked by my horrible state of weakness. I recall seeing an older guy (50 years+) pressing almost twice what I could do for 15 reps on the machine. I was early 20s, he was "old". I thought being young automatically meant good strength. I obviously lacked perspective and thought I was a lot stronger than I really was back then... Now I have a lot of respect for 50+ guys after seeing what some of them lift in the SL Community like Bob (64y, read page 185).

I started reading about full body workouts in the Men's Health UK forums. Then I realized that the lifts they were talking about were free-weight and not machines. I researched how to do these free-weight lifts on Google and I believe it was the SL Squat guide that connected me to StrongLifts.

StrongLifts 5x5 came across as an organised and structured way of training. I'm analytical by nature and concluded that the SL5x5 routine was building upon solid foundations and principles. I was convinced to start SL5x5 as I wanted to improve athletic abilities and pushing weights on weight machines would not have the same practical carry-over. At first sight I was daunted by having to learn technique on all these lifts; but after applying some common sense I decided that the invested time to learn the lifts would pay off long term.

I had never done a Squat, so I had a couple of goes first with just the bar (I watched the youtube video from Mehdi 15 times at work). Then I fired away 5x5 with 40kg and it felt about right. Completed all with good form, or so I thought. Last reps were a bit tough, muscles were not used to it.

My logic was that women started with the 20kg bar and so I should start with more. I didn't really grasp the concept of the bar quickly getting heavy when adding 2.5kg every session. It was a combination of over-estimating my own strength level and especially ego. My father has had physical work all his life and is strong because of this. In terms of height and width I was similar to him (but lighter) and so I wrongly concluded that I also had to be strong from the get-go. This sounds really stupid now, but this was my reasoning at the time. After trying free weights I made some realisations pretty quickly.

On the Bench I REALLY noticed how machines give false strength. I had a tricky time balancing the weight properly. It took strength to balance it, strength I had never needed to use on machines. To put it into perspective; on the machine I could easily go 65kg+ 5x5 and I had plenty enough with 40kg on the free weight bench press to be honest. This was sufficient proof to me that free weights and SL5x5 was the best way to go about this.

40kg on the free weights Squat wasn't a problem, but 70kg+ was at that stage. The weight caught up with me faster than I could learn form properly at sufficient depth. I believe I was a **slow learner** on the Squat, the movement felt unnatural to me. If I could choose again today with the knowledge I have, I would have started with the empty bar and posted videos of me squatting to get a review of StrongLifts Members earlier.

These were the numbers I had before SL5x5 with my lifting experience at that point. I may have been able to force out more, but it would not have been safe to do so. I had severely weakened glutes, hips and hams from sitting so much and general lack of activity. My diet was also insufficient for my tall frame.

Andreas' Gains	Nov 2008	Dec 2010	Gains so far...
Age	23y	25y	
Body-weight (6'3")	180lb	202lb	+22lb
Deadlift	132lb	418lb	+286lb
Squat	88lb	352lb	+264lb
Bench Press	88lb	232lb	+144lb

My bodyweight has increased by 10kg but my relative strength has sky-rocketed on top of this. My lifting stats are obviously nothing amazing, but I'm stronger than the average guy on the street now. This may have some psychological impact confidence wise, although this is hard to quantify. I feel more at ease in social situations and I find normal day-to-day situations much easier to deal with, everything seems EASY compared to full-depth squats near your physical limit! If you can't relate to this, get started on lifting now and you will never regret it.



Other than that I feel more comfortable and I feel most physical challenges can be attacked with confidence. I notice that the strength carries over to all types of work. An

example is physical sledgehammer/ hatchet type gardening work. I helped some family not long ago with this and I could completely tear it up without getting fatigued or experiencing a lack of power. The lack of endurance got me into training originally, but I've almost only done strength training. My base cardio fitness improved noticeably as my lifts got stronger so I've not needed to add much dedicated cardio. I would do the same again; gain bodyweight and improve strength first. Compound lifts are much more fun than running.

I'm happy to have found this way of training and to know that all my lifts are done at proper range of motion with safe technique. I am particularly happy to have gotten a solid and deep squat technique as I struggled a lot with that lift. The SL Community has been very valuable in this regard. I was Squatting too high (not hitting parallel). Together with the help of the SL Members I corrected this and I now squat properly with hip crease below the knees.

My log inside the SL community is a neat way to keep training history and discuss things that went well or things that went really bad, or simply shit. You get responses from StrongLifts Members that can relate to the poundages you lift and understand the meaning of pushing themselves hard. It's very motivational to discuss training with like-minded people.

If you want to get in better shape I would recommend SL 5x5 along with an increased calorie diet to get the ball rolling. You can improve your performance and physique by using barbell compound lifts and adjusting your diet towards your goals. It works.

-SL Member Andreas aka "Maroon", 25, Oslo Norway.

“It has really changed me in more ways than just physical strength. I am getting to where I want to be with myself, getting stronger and confident”



My name is Tom Merkley, I live in Calgary, Canada. I work part time at a deli and go to school. Before I started lifting I was underweight, I am about 5'10 and I only weighed around 120lbs. I had almost no body fat, I was pretty weak and couldn't do much of anything really. I never did any sports before lifting.

I started lifting because I wanted to change who I was and improve myself. Being strong and confident is what I always wanted, but I wasn't. I started working out in the summer 2010, my routine was basically nothing, I had no organization or knew what I was doing besides what friends told me. I would try and workout 5 days a week, all isolation and machine exercises. I got no results, not even on machines or with dumbbells. I thought squats were the scariest exercise ever and were terrible for your back and knees, and only the weird strong looking guys did it. I was basically your average gym tool. The kind of kids you see with their friends wasting time on crap that doesn't work.

I found StrongLifts 5x5 through my friend Danny who started strength training. I got excited from what I saw and what he was doing, and thought maybe I could start seriously training and changing myself. I was skeptical too though, I didn't know anything about strength training, it was all new to me. But it seemed legitimate and I had a friend to try it with.

My results didn't go too fast right away since I was half-assing the program. But even just doing that I put on 10lbs in a couple of weeks, while barely eating and lifting not too much. I thought my scale was broken, I didn't know if I was being tricked by something or not.

I wanted to get really serious and make strength training apart of my life, and I found out that there was a StrongLifts Platinum Coaching Program, so it seemed obvious I should

invest in it. I think joining Mehdi's coaching program was one of if not the best decisions in my life, if only I could train with him in person haha. It has really changed me I think, in more ways than just physical strength too. I am getting to where I want to be with myself, getting stronger and confident. The online coaching feels very personal, it can be harsh and rewarding, and Mehdi is very good at motivating especially. You get change and progress out of it, I am getting what I want out of it, actual results, more than I have with years of on and off training. I would definitely recommend it.

Tom's Gains	June 21 st 2010	Nov 22 nd 2010	Gains so far...
Age	20y	21y	
Body-weight (5'10")	130lbs	156lbs	+26lbs
Deadlift	110lb	240lb	+130lb
Squat	145lb	240lb	+95lb
Bench Press	95lb	145lb	+50lb

This is now the 5th consecutive month I'm personally being coached by Mehdi. I think very differently than I did 5 months ago, about everything in my life. I am a lot more organized and motivated in everything, I am more mature, confident, reliant, consistent in almost everything I do. A lot more confident in myself, see myself differently, feel like more of a man basically. I know I have a lot more work to do still.

I am surprised how often people notice, friends, family, co-workers. People say I look different now, stronger, thicker. I get compliments a lot, about how easily I lift a crate of meat, or how much healthier I am starting to look. People I know come to me for advice about working out, dieting, etc. Friends and co-workers even comment on my change in behavior often (more confident, assertive). I heard of StrongLifts 5x5 from my friend Danny, I now lift more than him on almost all exercises (except press). He is impressed with what I have done with myself so far.

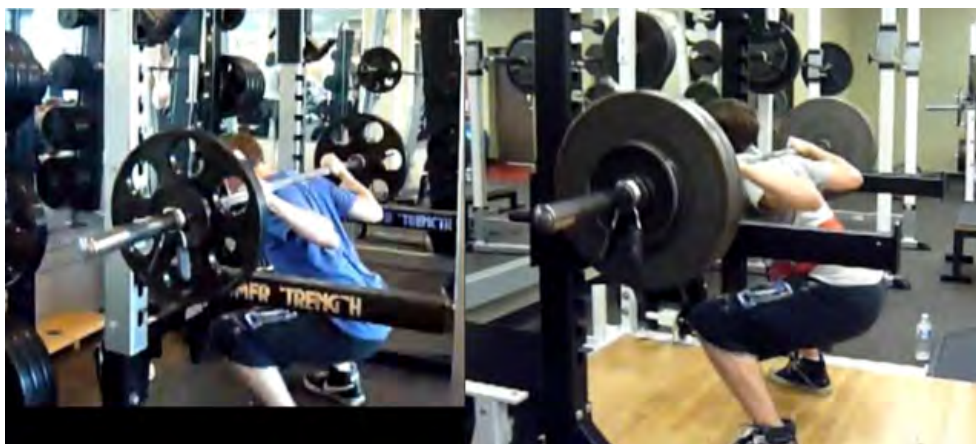
I can do a lot more, I am more confident in my strength. Lifting things around home and work is easy. I am the person people ask to do physical labor they need done. It all makes me want to get even stronger. My goal is to get over 300lbs in squat and deadlift. Just keep lifting and getting as strong as I can be. I want to be a healthy, good looking, strong weight. No more skinny twig look. Around 170-180lbs for my height. I see myself getting more disciplined and dedicated to strength training as I learn what it takes to be a good lifter (the diet, training, strictness).

I get lots of looks in the gym, sometimes it's because I have been hogging one of the squat racks or bars for about an hour to do squats then press then dead lift, sometimes I think it's because meat heads can't believe a smaller guy like me is lifting more than them, and other times it's probably because idiots think I'm using "wrong" form. Sometimes I get compliments on my form, or how I look. Other times I get told how I should have my feet closer together, and how I should never go below parallel on squat cause it will hurt my knees and back hahaha. The only people squatting more than me now are the few guys I see that are actual strength trainers (200lb + guys that are built like tanks, wearing regional competition shirts).

Training with Mehdi wasn't easy, I've had to wake up at 7am everyday, eat up to 7000

calories a day, I have lost a girlfriend, had friends attempt suicide, family issues, all while still having to keep up an appetite, sleeping schedule, and training routine. A LOT of days I didn't want to do shit, I didn't want to get out of bed, eat anything, go to the gym, some days I didn't do that stuff. I messed up plenty of times with sleeping in, not eating, etc. Some days I was physically sick and couldn't eat or sleep, but I still hit the gym feeling like crap. Other times I was feeling depressed, sad, whatever, but I still ate and trained.

I just made myself get up early and start eating and getting ready to get to the gym, didn't matter if I worked later that day or was having problems in life, I was in a bad mood all day and didn't feel like waking up or eating or working out plenty of times. It is just will power that made me do all of it.



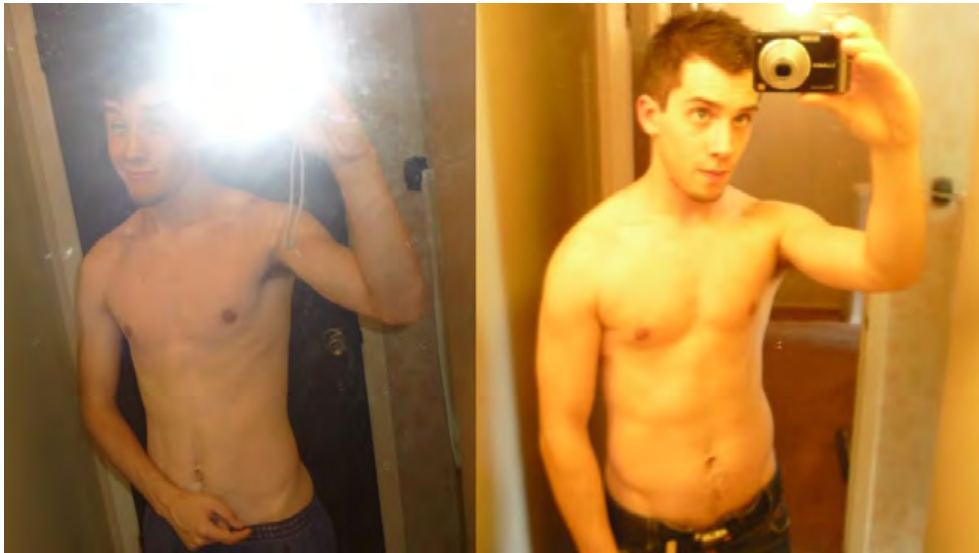
I learnt from failures to eat and train hard enough that consistency is important in growing strong. This way of thinking transferred over into other aspects of my life too. I learnt how to deal with and solve problems that held me back from my goals. I knew I had to change how I ate and trained, and change how I thought too, stop thinking like a loser. To know what I want and try and get it, all that cliché stuff.

Also of course I found out that 90% of what I had heard about training, supplements, workouts, gaining muscle, what to eat, everything was bull shit. I learnt what really works and put it into practice to see for myself that it works.

The biggest thing holding me back was my own thinking. I thought working out and eating properly were very very complicated. Fitness magazines had so many different workouts and apparently you needed to do different routines every month or whatever to get results. There are so many kinds of supplements and different kinds of proteins and shakes and power bars, etc. Everyone had different info, how much protein you should eat, how to do exercises properly to not hurt yourself, what to eat and when to eat it. I didn't know there was a difference between body building and strength training. I didn't know anything. It seemed pretty much impossible to get strong and the body I want.

Once I started working with Mehdi I discovered I wasn't eating nearly as much as I thought I was, and that what I needed to eat wasn't supplements. I was unmotivated because of all the confusion I had, once I learnt what was gonna work for me I started getting into things, and getting motivated to keep going. I use to think my genetics were also gonna prevent me from ever getting strong, and that's why I had been so skinny my whole life. I proved myself wrong within a few weeks, when I put on a lot of weight and was lifting a lot more once I started doing things properly.

By working with Mehdi directly I have learnt the importance of consistency, keeping track of everything and sticking to a plan. Tracking my diet everyday and making sure I ate enough helped me to start getting stronger. Tracking my calories every day for 5 months was a pain usually, really not that hard but it can get annoying. I never tried tracking my diet before in my life. After doing it though I saw how little I had always been eating, and it made it easier to visualize I guess, what I was eating and what I needed to eat to put on weight. It just helps to see the numbers.



I can understand you would have doubts about StrongLifts 5x5, I did. But after the first month, if you are trying hard at it, you will see it was a good decision. If you really want to change your life and make training a part of it and change yourself for the better, this can be a good way to help you do it I think.

The price for Mehdi's private coaching is expensive, but all coaching is really. Most trainers that would come with you to a gym charge by the lesson (just for that one day) which is pointless, it's impossible to learn anything in just one day. Progress isn't made in just one day, it takes hard work and lots of time and dedication. Personal trainers can cost hundreds a week, or month depending on how good they are, but most trainers are idiots, most PEOPLE in general are idiots about becoming strong and how the body works.

StrongLifts seemed like it wasn't full of bull shit and bro-science. The moment I heard of Mehdi coaching, I jumped on the chance to send in an application to join his Platinum Coaching program. Mehdi decided to take me as a private client and we started June 21st 2010. If you are dedicated to changing yourself then this coaching program might be for you. It is very expensive, especially for someone who makes a shit earning like myself, but it has been worth it for me. You have to be willing to dedicate time and effort into it to make it worth your while. I did that and I am very happy with what I have gotten out of it.

-StrongLifts Platinum Member Tom Merkley, 21, Calgary Canada.

“I used to think of myself as a “hardgainer. Now I don’t think there’s such thing – just a guy who doesn’t know how to train or eat.”



My name is Gabriel, and I currently reside in London, England. I’m 25 years old, 1.73m tall and I’m a sales exec for a computer company.

I used to think of myself as a “hardgainer” and for many years tried everything to gain weight and muscle, all to no avail. Eating more fat, drinking oil, taking expensive “weight gainer” supplements, not moving at all and lifting weights (isolation stuff) most days of the week. Nothing worked.

I thought the reasons why I never gained weight were a combination of genetics, insufficient training, and stress from work. I resigned myself to believe that I was somehow “born skinny” and there was nothing I could do to change that “fact”. I remember when I was a kid, my doctor told me that being skinny was OK and that I would rather be skinny than fat, so I would live a long life. This didn’t comfort me. I still didn’t like my image and I had no confidence in my body – a sentiment that I still had until recently.

I had very little confidence when it came to showing my body (even my forearms – I always wore long sleeves, even in hot days). Girls didn’t look at me in college and preferred the more “buff” boys who were in sports teams, and for this reason I remained single all the way through high school and college. I also didn’t like to go to swimming pools for fear of people making fun of my skinny body. My cousins and friends called me a skeleton or a bag of bones. This wasn’t really helping with the self-confidence.

In 2008, I got a gym membership as I thought it was the logical thing to do in order to get big and strong. Plus, every one of my buff friends was a member of this particular gym. But my efforts were futile as I was not doing things right: I was not eating the right foods in the right amounts, and I was overtraining by training too many times a week with high repetition weight lifting and very little food and recovery.

During my time in the gym I trained 4 to 6 times a week, all the exercises done in a haphazard manner: I would do what I felt like doing – some barbell curls, lat pulldowns, dumbbell flies, concentration curls, and sometimes push ups, sit ups and bodyweight squats. Mostly curls to be honest. I was simply listening to my whim and sometimes followed the advice of guys in the gym and relatives who told me to “curl to get bigger”. I knew that most of these guys were either on steroids or eating enormous amounts of food. I couldn't bring myself to do either. Lack of motivation, I'm sure.

Well, my arms grew a few centimeters bigger and I could definitely see a bit of a six pack showing. But I still didn't gain any weight at all and I didn't look bigger than I was in my teenage years. I still weighed a mere 55kg, which you can obviously see in my picture on the left (taken in September 2009, before I started GOMAD and SL5x5).

During the autumn of 2009, I was talking to a friend, and I told him that I hated being a hardgainer. He recommended that I go for GOMAD and adhere to the StrongLifts 5x5 programme. I still remember his words: “milk and compound lifts are the key”. I soon started the StrongLifts 5x5 programme and the results have been amazing. I had given up on weight training and having found something so simple as SL5x5 gave me a lot of hope. I thought it looked easy, but once I got down to it I found it to be hard as hell for me, but I decided that it was all worth it.

Gabriel's Gains	Sep 2009	Oct 2009	July 2010	Gains so far...
Age	25y	25y	26y	
Body-weight (5'8")	121lb	141lb	165lb	+44lb
Body Fat	15%	17.5%	11%	-4,00%
Waist	30"	30"	32"	+2"
Deadlift	110lb	154lb	341lb	+231lb
Squat	100lb	149lb	286lb	+186lb
Bench Press	88lb	110lb	209lb	+121lb

Thanks to StrongLifts 5x5 and GOMAD I have gained 44lbs in 11 months, from 55kg to 75kg. Also, I gained more strength than I ever have gained before. And it's been cheaper than going to the gym, as I invested less than £200 in a bench, a Squat Rack, a set of weights with an Olympic bar, and a sturdy Pull-up bar.

I definitely feel extremely self-confident with the way I look now. I am not afraid to go to the beach or the swimming pool. People have all started to say how “buff” and big I look nowadays. Girls check me out when I go out (to my fiancée's dislike) and only my mum remembers what I looked like when I was skinny. I feel more able to protect my loved ones and my libido is simply amazing. I feel I can get much more out of life. I mean, I could get a lot out of it before but now my body is stronger – with a strength that spills into my state of mind day by day.

My cardiovascular endurance has improved also as a result of strength training. I do like doing some cardio from time to time, but I no longer feel I “need” to do it, and I do less than before. I can now swim 500m without ending up panting, I can run faster and longer distances, my fighting skills (I have a background in Martial Arts) have definitely improved as a consequence of my strength training – I can now lift an opponent overhead, which I is

something I only dreamt of doing in the past.

I was concerned about the financial and health consequences of drinking so much milk and eating much more food than I was eating back then. But I still went and did it after reading about SL Members who had a lot of success with GOMAD and SL5x5. Look at me now – healthy as ever and the financial investment isn't as great as I thought. Roughly £3 a day for all the milk I needed, and no changes to the rest of my food bill – I switched to all whole foods, which ended up being cheaper than canned and processed foods.

GOMAD results: 20lbs in 3 weeks: During the time I was doing GOMAD I felt sick sometimes (it's normal, don't be afraid) - I had diarrhea and nausea at times since I was not accustomed to eating so much. But then came a time when I started to crave milk. I couldn't have a meal without one or two large glasses of milk. The stuff is like ambrosia to me now. At first I didn't think it was healthy as I heard people telling me that milk is bad for you in large quantities. I thought "well, other guys are doing it and they don't look sick to me", so I still followed my conviction and did GOMAD. I have already stopped doing GOMAD since I reached my ideal bodyweight; however, I still drink the stuff - sometimes up to 2 litres a day if I feel like it.

Now I don't think there's such thing as a "hardgainer" – just a guy who doesn't know how to train or eat. It has nothing to do with genetics. That's an excuse for failure. Based on my experience I would recommend GOMAD and SL5x5 to any person who considers himself a "hardgainer". Stop giving yourself silly excuses. Get under the bar and drink your milk!

I have also benefited greatly from Mehdi's blog and the StrongLifts Community. Nowhere else have I found so much sound advice and here my questions have been answered honestly and the answers just make sense.

If you're a skinny guy who REALLY wants to get big, I'll say this to you: Read Mehdi's book, re-read it and apply the principles of SL5x5. And drink your milk, for goodness' sake. Don't be put off by what you hear from others. Milk is good for you and GOMAD is the best, healthiest way to put on weight. Forget expensive protein shakes and weight gainers – that is the real bad stuff and it simply doesn't work. I am, along with many others, living proof that GOMAD and SL5x5 simply works.

-SL Member Gabriel, aka "GDA9", 25, London, England.

“My weight went from 220 lbs to 195 lbs, I am stronger, faster, leaner, healthier, happier.”



After being lazy for so long I started working out in 2008, dreaming to get in best shape of my life in about 6 months. I failed because of lack of planning, lack of discipline and lack of valid information. I was overweight, on the verge of obesity. I worked out for about 1 and a half years and my weight dropped only 10lbs. My strength increased because I was beginner, but nothing major was going on. I looked almost the same.

Off course I bought creatine, whey, flaxseed oil, some other pre-workout bullshit and guess what? Nothing really happened, except that probably my liver and my kidneys were crying and asking me what they done to me so I'm punishing them with all that junk every day. Got some muscle as well, but at what expense? I quit using creatine and preworkout stuff. Took awhile to get used to working out clean again, but I managed to do it.

I was still wasting my time with some split routine workouts, with a lot of triceps extensions, biceps curls, leg extensions, hamstring curls, calves work, annoying long ab workouts... All this gave some results, but nothing major. I done Squats when I was bored (with horrible form). I done Deadlifts... Wait, I didn't do Deadlifts. I thought Deadlift is something that hurts your back and is useless.

I figured out I was doing something wrong. Well hello! So I started reading how to get big and lean. I finally learned Squats are important. I learned good nutrition is number 1, without it, you can throw everything else away, I learned rest and sleep are more important than actual training. But all that was still not settling in, because information came from a lot of sources.

I started losing fat, maintained muscle, but my strength was not impressive. I was jealous (not ashamed to admit) to see kids in the gym lifting more weight than me, and being same size or smaller. One person who was deadlifting 405 lbs and weighed at least 20 lbs less than me said - “I have a website for you, I think you'll like it.” Guess what website that was? I got home, went on StrongLifts.com, started reading Mehdi's book, then everything else on the website, then applying all I learned.

Now most important of everything: Results. I am stronger, faster, leaner, healthier,

happier. My weight went from 220 lbs to 195 lbs, but that's not so important. What's important is that while my weight (FAT) was going away, I was getting stronger, and I am still getting stronger. Strength is going up, fat is going down. I feel amazing.

- Body-weight: 200lbs @ 5'10"
- Bench Press: 240lbs (5×5)
- Squats: 275lbs (5×5)
- Deadlifts: 315lbs (1×5)
- Overhead Press: 145lbs (5×5)

People who say that 5×5 is bad for size gains have conclusively proved that they have no knowledge about the matter and should stay quiet. SL5x5 has done a lot of good things for me.

Not long time ago, some kid was impressed by my strength and body so he asked me what I do and how I do it. I told him I do StrongLifts 5×5. He said I was bullshitting him, no way I do 4-5 exercises per training session. So I said, let's try it one day. He is one of those kids who can Bench Press more than he can Squat (and does partial Squats), and don't know what Deadlifts are.

So he put 90lbs on a bar, did 5 funny Squats and said to me that was easy. I told him: "Do those Squats right, all the way down", and I even thought him hip drive, how to place the bar without a pad. I told him to lower that weight, cause it was too much. So he got the form almost right, but refused to lower the weight. He was benching funny as well, so I showed him to bench properly.

I didn't see the kid in the gym for a week. I finally saw him and he started complaining to me how he was soooo sore, couldn't move his legs and arms for 3 days, and went back to his old workout, because he "can't" do SL 5×5. "Bro I can't." I just said ok, and continued with my workout. How much will something work is up to you. Up to your discipline, concentration and determination. Never say you can't do something – you can. Approach it with attitude: "I can't do it yet," or "I have problems doing it, please help me," or just be honest and say: "I don't want to do it."

Remember to start StrongLifts 5×5 with low weights, lower than what you think is enough. Get the form right, stick with the right form at all costs. Do NOT give up when weights get really heavy. That's when you get strong, when you grow and all other good things happen.

Be persistent, eat big, train hard, have a right mindset and results will come.

-SL Member Branimir aka "Exodus", 23, New Hampshire USA.

“My brother was much stronger than me when I started, but he stalled out while I continued to progress, and I've since beaten all his PRs.”



My name is Joe Farrell, and I'm a software developer from Omaha, Nebraska. I started lifting weights in January 2010. I was 29 years old, 6'2", and weighed 185lbs. I had lost a lot of weight and become skinny-fat instead of just plain fat, but I was still weak, and tired easily, so I was looking for something to improve my physical condition. The cardio machines at my gym didn't appeal to me; long cardio sessions bore me to tears, and my plantar fasciitis is always a concern when I'm on my feet for long stretches at a time.

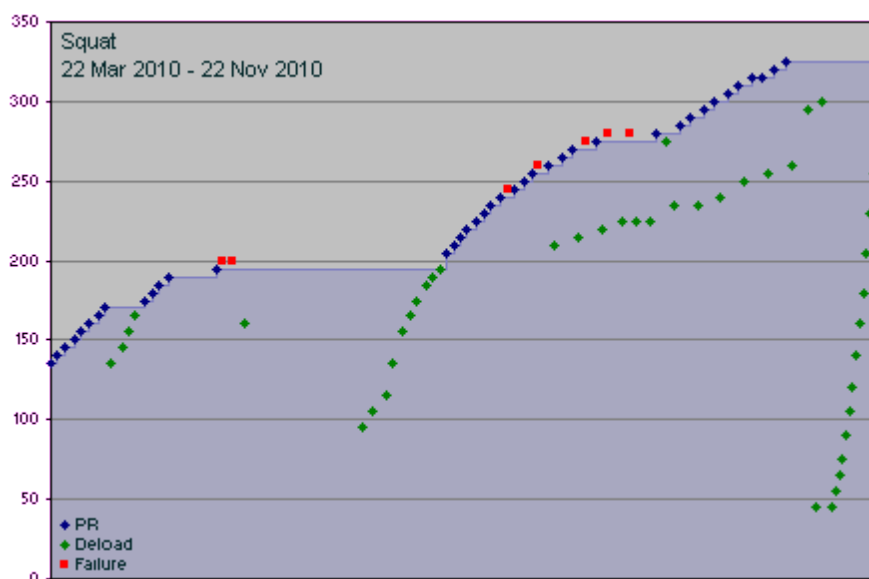
Eventually I hit on strength training. My younger brother, who is far more athletic than I am, was looking to get back into lifting around the same time, so this worked out perfectly. We started out on a "program" of his devising, which was basically a four-day split using way the hell too many exercises including every type of curl imaginable. We did squats on leg day, but stopped way above parallel because my brother told me going lower would wreck my knees. I didn't know any better.

The "program" was good for some early gains, but in less than two months, I stalled everywhere at once and couldn't get unstuck. I didn't know what to do aside from trying the weights over and over again, and this obviously wasn't working, so I finally did what I should have done in the first place and started scouring the Internet for information.

I don't recall how I came across StrongLifts.com, but I liked the detailed descriptions of exercise technique. I learned that I'd been benching and squatting improperly. The StrongLifts 5x5 program looked intriguingly simple – it almost looked *too* simple, given that I'd gotten accustomed to doing eight exercises a day, every day. I was also hesitant to try it because I figured my brother wouldn't want to switch programs, and I didn't want to lose my training partner, but I was getting nowhere. I needed a change. SL 5x5 was a proven program whereas what I was doing was not, so I decided to give it a try.

I began the StrongLifts 5x5 program on March 22nd 2010. I started with 135lbs on the squat, 95lbs on the bench and deadlift, and an empty bar on the press. My brother decided to try the program too, so we'd still be doing the same thing, but he never really made an

effort to follow it. He started with very close to his max weights, then added 30-60 minutes of isolation exercises to the end of every session, and trained on his off days too, because 5x5 alone wasn't "fulfilling" enough. Eventually he dropped it altogether and went back to his split routine. He was much stronger than me when we started, but he stalled out while I continued to progress, and I've since beaten all his Prs.



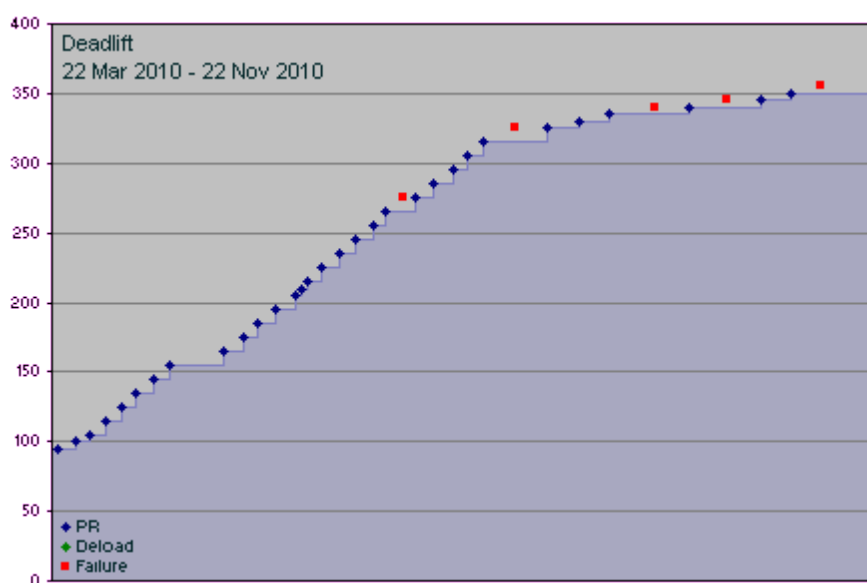
The squat and I have had our differences, so I've progressed more slowly than I otherwise might have. I've never had to deload because of weight, but I've done so for a few other reasons. That first one you see was when I switched from high-bar to low-bar. I knew that Mehdi recommends low-bar squats, but I'd been doing high-bar squats up to that point because that was all I knew. The low-bar position felt so unnatural to me at first that I thought I must have been doing something wrong; I was afraid I was going to drop the weight at any moment. Eventually I realized that I just needed time to get used to it, so I went back down to 135 and worked my way back up. Today the low-bar position feels comfortable and totally secure. In retrospect, perhaps I should have started the program with a lighter work weight. I started at 135 on the squat because I had done squats before, albeit badly, and thought I could handle the weight easily with correct form, but learning the correct form took more time than I thought it would.

By the time I was squatting 200, I was having trouble with my knees and it was getting worse, which prompted me to take six weeks off of squatting while I waited to see a doctor who was supposed to know about this stuff (but who instead gave me the Squats Are Bad speech). After six weeks, I discovered the joys of foam rolling and mobility work, and these resolved my knee problems completely. I deloaded all the way to 95 and resolved to pay close attention to form as I worked back up. At the same time, I reduced the volume of my work sets from 5x5 to 3x5.

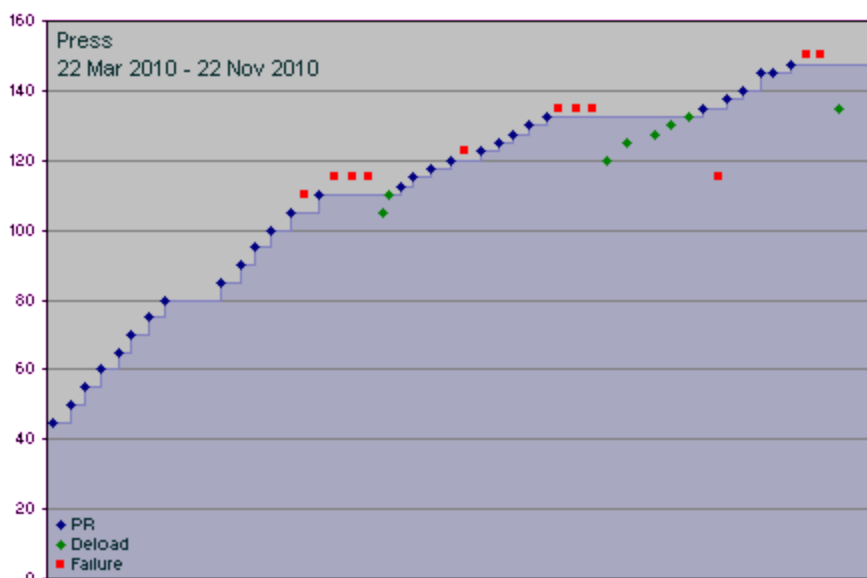
My latest deload, that deep parabola at the very right edge of the graph, was an experiment with the Starr rehab protocol. By the time I got into the upper 200s, I was having considerable pain in my adductors while squatting, even with just the empty bar. I think this may have been a result of descending into the hole too quickly, with not enough control. I tried to train through it for awhile, but it started getting worse. Originally I was going to try a 10% deload with a more knees-forward stance -- that's those two green points around 300lbs -- but then I decided to give Starr's rehab protocol a shot. That's 15

consecutive days of squatting, with nine days of 25-rep sets, two days of 15s, two days of 10s, and two days of 5s. I just finished that on Monday, and my adductors are feeling good, so I will now return to my regular progression, and I see no reason why I won't be able to push my squat still higher.

I had never attempted the deadlift before beginning the 5x5 program. I'd heard they were bad for your back – like squats are bad for your knees, right? This lift was the hardest for me to learn. Aside from my issues with getting the form correct, my back strength was pretty poor. I had read that an untrained man my size (the size I was then) ought to be able to deadlift around 150lbs. I tried working up to 135 on my first day so I wouldn't have to deal with stacking plates underneath the bar to elevate it, but it wasn't happening. Not even close. So I started with 95lbs instead, and even that felt difficult at first.



My bench press might still be my weakest lift, proportionally speaking, but I've been very happy with my progress, in no small part because of how much the bench frustrated me when I was doing it on my brother's split routine. Before starting SL 5x5, I had been trying to bench 6x155 and had failed four consecutive attempts, even with an incomplete ROM (again, I didn't know any better). When I got to 155 on SL 5x5, I blew right through it. I stalled at 185 and was worried that I wouldn't get any further, but after working back up, I had an awesome string of successes and went up to 220 before I missed another rep.



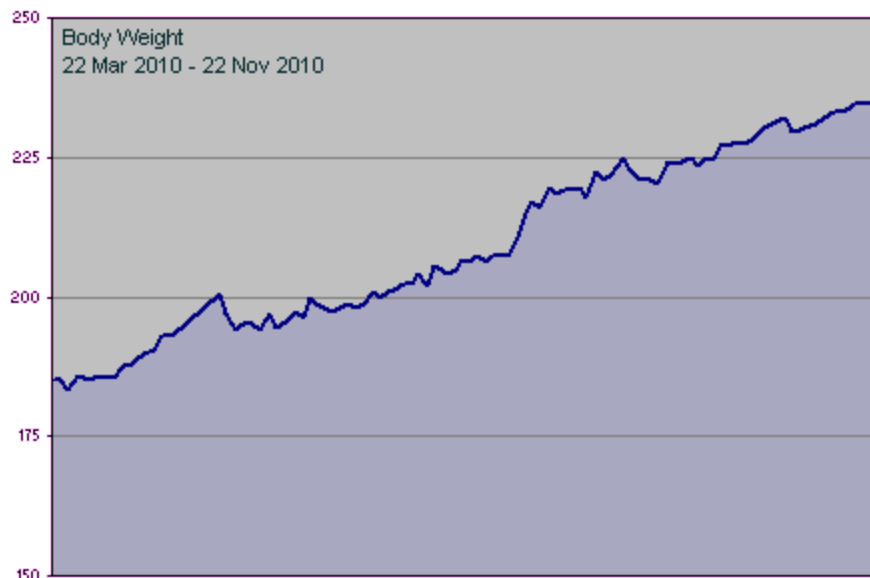
This was the only lift for which I started with an empty bar, partly because I'd never done it before, and partly because I figured it wouldn't be all that long before it started to get challenging. Sure enough, at just over 100lbs, the press started kicking my ass. I deloaded at 115, which was right around the time of my switch to 3x5. After seeing some advice on the SL Community about microloading the press, I got myself some 1.25lb plates and have been using them to advance on the press ever since. I've been using them on the bench also. I strongly recommend this to everyone. Five-pound jumps on the press are just too much for most of us to sustain for long, I think.

I had to deload a second time at 135, which really sucked, because that was my goal weight; I failed right at the finish line. I worked back up and got it though, and made it to 150 before I started having trouble again. Unfortunately, that failure at 150 was a pretty spectacular one. My first attempt got me 5/0/0, and my second was 5/4/0. What would have been my third attempt fell in the middle of my Starr rehab program, in which you're supposed to avoid heavy work outside of the lift you're using to work the injury, so as to preserve your resources for recovery, so I decided on a pre-emptive deload and did 135, then nothing for the rest of the rehab program. I'll work my way up from there, then switch to 1x5 when I start having trouble again.

I've gained 51 pounds since I started training. My body fat percentage has ticked up a few points, and I'm definitely carrying some extra weight, but certainly I'm not turn-you-to-stone hideous or anything. Any adverse effects one might experience from looking at me are likely to be minor, as long as one avoids frequent exposure over long periods of time. My wife will probably experience health problems as a result of this at some point, but if she wasn't willing to deal with that, she shouldn't have married me.

Joe's Gains	March 2010	Nov 2010	Gains so far...
Age	29y	29y	
Body-weight (6'2")	185lb	236lb	+51lb
Deadlift	95lb	350lb	+255lb
Squat	135lb	325lb	+190lb
Bench Press	95lb	222.5lb	+127.5lb
Press	45lb	147.5lb	+102.5lb

In all seriousness, though, I'm very happy with the way the weight gain has gone. Friends and family who haven't seen me in a long time are stunned when they see how different I look, and several of the regulars at the gym have begun asking me what I'm doing to get so big. My brother has begun asking me for advice on his diet. And while my wife was at first uneasy about the idea of me putting on a lot of weight, she's had nothing but good things to say about the changes in my body.



When I started SL 5x5, I didn't particularly want to gain weight. I figured I'd just try to get stronger without getting any heavier, because I was paranoid about gaining fat. This is probably because at one point, back in 2005, I weighed 252 with a relatively high body fat percentage. With (poor) diet and cardio, I went as low as 179 at one point, and I couldn't imagine adding back all the weight I'd worked so hard to lose. It's not at all the same, though. I look and feel a lot better today than I did the last time I weighed 235. The only downside is that I've had to replace a lot of expensive clothing. Hopefully I won't have to do that again. Perhaps I'll level off where I am now... but I've said that before.

I began a training log inside the SL Community about 4 weeks after starting the program, and it's proven to be an invaluable resource. Very few of my friends and family lift at all, and those few who do don't train the way I do, so I can't really have a two-sided discussion with them about my programming, my successes, and my setbacks. Since the forum is full of people walking the same or similar paths, I have a place where I can get useful insights when I'm struggling with something, and where I can share my accomplishments with people who are as enthusiastic about them as I am. That is a huge motivator, and helps

me get myself to the gym even when I'm feeling beat up and tired and would rather stay home. It's also been helpful to be able to look back at how I was feeling during past workouts from time to time, just to get a little perspective. It's cool when you realize that a weight that took all your strength a few months prior is now an easy part of your warmup.

To those who may be in a position similar to where I was back when I started SL 5x5, I would offer a few simple pieces of advice. First, trust in the program. It has worked for tons of people and will work for you too, if you apply it correctly. Second, don't let impatience get the best of you. It's tempting to increase your weights too quickly, or to try pushing through an injury for too long, but these things will slow you down in the end. Sometimes you need to take a step back in order to keep moving forward, and a few weeks is nothing in the grand scheme of things. Be smart. Third, do your homework. There's a huge amount of misinformation on strength training out there, much of it spread by people whose background or training suggests that they really ought to know better. When someone tells you that squats will wreck your knees or that deadlifts will wreck your back or whatever, don't take them at their word. Do your own research and draw your own conclusions. And finally, start a training log. It's the best thing you can do to keep yourself accountable and motivated. The SL Community is full of people who have been successful in reaching their goals, and we'll help you get there too.

-SL Member Joe Farrell aka "Ironblayde", 29, Omaha USA.

“Strength training has aroused an inner confidence that I didn’t know I had. I’ve been promoted in my job and have moved into leadership roles”



My name is Adam, I’m 29 and I’m from Australia. I’m a 9-5 office type guy. I’ve been lifting weights on and off since I was about 15. I can remember curling a house brick regularly even younger than that maybe. I can also remember having a heavy log in the yard and lifting it from the ground above my head like the guys in the Olympics. I didn’t know what I was doing, but I knew I liked to lift stuff. I played a lot of sport in school and lifted weights as a complement, just doing heaps of reps and going from machine to machine. Sometimes using every machine in our school gym. I don’t recall there being a single barbell.

Over the years I did weights on and off. I put on heaps of weight from my school days and neglected my physique. But I’ve always been a big guy so it didn’t bother me much. I’ve always owned a set of dumbbells and I’ve kind of always haphazardly done a few curls here or a few over head press there. I’ve had two stints at commercial gyms. The first time I joined a gym I was working out 5 days a week doing the body building type routine the personal trainer showed me. This went pretty well and I lost some weight, but after a year of this routine I had little muscle growth to show for it, and even less motivation. Quit the gym and moved on. Put on more weight than when I started.

The first time I joined a gym was right after my mom was diagnosed with a terminal illness and I broke up with a long-term girlfriend. It was a combination of these dramas as well as an appreciation of my own mortality in addition to being overweight, out of shape and needing something positive in my life. I figured lifting weights was it. I just wish I had been strength training then instead of the bodybuilding stuff I was doing.

The reason I joined a gym the second time was to improve my strength. About February 2009 I had a brain wave that I wanted to get strong. I had been grappling for about 2 years and I figured being stronger would be a good idea. I can’t remember what I searched for, but I found stronglifts and it was like a revelation. I can remember reading the book for the first time and it just made so much sense. I’d never heard of a 5×5 routine before. I

remember thinking what on earth is this Mehdi guy going on about? Everyone knows you have to do 3×10 right? Everyone knows you have to do a 5 day body split, back day, chest day, bicep day, leg day etc etc.

Fortunately I was open minded enough to give SL5x5 a go. And that decision was one of the best I've ever made. Before I found StrongLifts I had actually started back at a commercial gym and was doing a body building routine I got from a supplement company website. How embarrassing. Going nowhere and injuring elbows with endless curls I decided this stronglifts program was worth a shot. I gotta admit SL5x5 was very different to anything else I had tried before and the idea of all those squats worried me a little. Anytime I had done squats before, they hurt. But what I was doing wasn't great so I had nothing to lose trying a new approach. I dug in and got started on StrongLifts 5×5.

Well it was pretty clear to me even after just a month on the program that every minute I had spent lifting weights up until this point had been an almost complete waste of time. Like I said, it was a revelation. At the same time I was disappointed at the strength I could have gained in the years spent doing useless junk, I was also excited as I knew that from now on each session would be inching me forward, every time. This was the first time that I had tracked the weight that I lifted and the reps. Before I had no idea what weight I was going to do until I got to it and thought, yeah that sounds about right. Because I had been lifting for a while, plus being a big guy I starting my first StrongLifts 5x5 workout with the following weights in April 2009:

Adam's Gains	April 2009	July 2010	Dec 2010	Gains so far...
Age	27y	29y	29y	
Body-weight (6'0")	125kg	140kg	145kg	
Deadlift	80kg	210kg	240kg	+160kg
Squat	60kg	230kg	275kg	+215kg
Bench Press	60kg	132,5kg	140kg	+80kg
Press	40kg	102,5kg	117kg	+77kg

Today my weight is up to 145kg, I don't know what my body fat is, but it would be fair to say that is it less than when I started. I now have thick slabs of muscle across my back, my arms and legs are huge and overall I have a much more intimidating physique. People regularly comment on my physique. Even though I still have quite a high level of body fat, I even get people asking me if I use steroids! Of course I don't.

A more important change though is that I hardly care how I look like. The look part means almost nothing to me at all. It's not why I lift. So why do I lift? Not to look a certain way, I lift to be strong. To feel that sense of achievement and to be able to look myself in the mirror and know that I did something few others did today. I found my limit and pushed through it. And more, I get to have this feeling again and again. That is why I lift.

Since I've been strength training I've been promoted in my job and have moved into leadership roles. I don't know that these two are related, but the self-confidence strength training gives you certainly enhanced my leadership skills. Strength training has aroused an inner confidence that I didn't know I had. I've never been short of confidence, but I've been overweight for as long as I can remember and I guess at some sub-conscious level

this affected me, but since I've been strength training I could care less about my weight. That's not to say I'm not going to work to improve, it means that I don't care what other people think, and I'm not hung about it. I'm comfortable in my own skin.

Since I've been strength training I've quit smoking and I drink very occasionally. I used to smoke 20-30 or more a day and drink every day. Now I might not drink more than once a week, and even then it's only a drink or two instead of getting wiped out. I also get sleep. I get to bed early each night and I'm up before sunrise everyday. It took a little to get used to, but I love this change in my life. The discipline of getting up before dawn each day is very rewarding. You have more productive hours each day. I get up, get breakfast, go train and still get to work early. I get to finish early and go train grappling or muay thai, or go home and spend quality time with my family. In my experience getting up early translates to getting to bed early. Getting to bed early can cure many bad habits, such as drinking each night or partying too hard!

I got so into the strength training that my grappling fell by the wayside. I didn't grapple for about 12 months. Only recently have I gone back to training and whilst my fitness has dropped a little my strength is through the roof. Once my fitness level comes back to where it was the overall improvement will be incredible. That's not to say I'm not fit, but weight training and grappling require different sort of fitnesses.

In the future I want to get my body fat down. I've not focused on it to date, but I have started a stricter diet and I expect to keep the same strength and muscle mass and move to around 125kg. I also want to see all of my weights go up. I also want to improve my technique. I want to continually improve my technique. I think it's something that even after 20 years can still be tweaked and improved. And most importantly I want to stick with it. I want to still be lifting 20 years from now. Not to walk away after a year or two, but make this a lifestyle that continues for as long as I am able. So I don't consider myself a success story, but more a work in progress and this a progress update.

I was asked by a work colleague if I was interested in entering a strongman competition in October and I jumped at the chance. It was a novice comp aimed at beginners, which was just perfect for me. I was able to get in just 2 sessions using the strongman implements before the comp. I tied for third which was a very pleasing result. I have decided to pursue strongman and have more comps lined up for December 2010 and early 2011. My short term goal is to win a local comp. My long term goal is to compete nationally.



The StrongLifts Community has been a big part of my success to date. I post a log here for a couple of reasons. I've gotten used to keeping a record of my workouts now and I enjoy posting my latest numbers. I also like the accountability to myself and the other on the site. But the most important thing I like it the motivation. Having others who have walked the path before you give you encouragement is fantastic motivation. And then, having others following your example is even more motivation. It creates a big feedback loop where we all progress together. All in different ways and at different speeds and

different levels with very different goals, but in a way we all push each other forward.

If you want to get stronger you have to train for strength. There is no point running marathons if you want to be a sprinter and vice versa. So if you want to be strong why are you doing a body builders routine? If I had to offer advice to someone considering doing SL5x5 I'd say just give me 12 weeks. Try this for just 12 weeks. It's 3 workouts for 12 weeks, 36 workouts, that's all. Try it. If you get no results or you don't like it, by all means go back to your body builder routine. This is not just hypothetical either, I've laid this challenge down to 4 different people who all did 12 weeks and are all still doing strength training to this day. All have moved on to other strength programs, but all are still strength training and progressing. This is definitely the place where strength starts.

-StrongLifts Member Adam aka "Adamr", 29, Australia.

***“I look more manly, and I’m a man of tradition
and feel men should be men”***



My name is Leon, I’m originally from Surrey (UK) but now live in Kent and work in a call centre, similar to Mehdi who worked on a helpdesk for 5y prior to creating StrongLifts.

I have played sports in the past, Cricket was big for me as a child and I played with a local team for a few years, I then went on to Rugby but without my glasses I couldn’t see what was going on so failed at that! I have also participated in Martial Arts such as Aikido (a few years), Thai Boxing (6 months) and finally BJJ for a year or so but missed out a fair bit of time due to injury. As I have moved to a new County I no longer train the BJJ.

I started lifting because it is always something I have been interested in, I was always a chubby as a youngster but despite that I was naturally strong for my age as I spent a lot of time outdoors, and the odd bit of manual labour does wonders for you. Also I am very old school in my thinking and I believe as a male it is my duty to protect my family and being strong is a good way of accomplishing this. My goal has always been to be strong for that reason, and because I value pushing yourself continually through life to both physically and mentally develop.

Prior to SL5x5 I have trained sporadically with dumbbells/barbells but I never had access to heavy weights so I just made do with what I had, but I always focused on compound exercises and a full body workout, although I followed no routine so I just did whatever I felt like. As I had no programming I had no system of adding weight or reps I just lifted the weights quite aimlessly so I did not really get anywhere with this, but it did keep me fit and I did lose the fat I carried as a child.

I found SL5x5 via google, I was searching for strength routines when I moved to Kent and all I had with me were dumbbells. I saw the main SL5x5 routine and really wanted to Barbell train but local facilities sucked so I kept with my DBs. I had my sights set on the routine for the future however as I agreed with all the principles.

I eventually bought a house with my Wife in April 2009 and started to set up a home gym by the end of June 2009 eager to try StrongLifts5x5. I followed the routine with some basic equipment at first but I did not join the StrongLifts Community as I thought it would be

clichy and annoying like a lot of the BB websites out there, however I eventually decided to jump in and found the SL Community to be extremely friendly and helpful – that was the best move I could have made, the support I received (and still do) in my training log is fantastic. I was also attracted by the challenges and logs as they provide great motivation.

I started with a bodyweight of 85.5kg and started light but unusually with a higher OHP than bench as I had never had access to a bench before. Back in Feb 2007 however when I trained BJJ I weighed 68kg and this was basically what I did the last time I trained

- Squats 3×15 @ 35kg (No rack, so i was cleaning the weight and pressing onto my shoulders – high bar style)
- Deadlift 3×5 @ 83kg

Leon's Gains	June 2009	November 2010	Gains so far...
Age	25y	26y	
Body-weight (5'10")	85.5kg	94.6kg	+9.1kg
Squat	37,3kg	165kg	+127,5kg
Deadlift	37,3kg	200kg	+162,7kg
Bench Press	27,3kg	102,5kg	+75,2kg

I had to keep the squats light or I would have problems getting the bar off my back (I did not even think about front squats at the time). I did not really get strong with the dumbbell routine to be honest but it did keep me fit at the time, theres a reason why barbells are the recommended prescription, anything else just not work as well and you can't make use of linear progression as easily as on a barbell.

I competed for the first time in April 2010 in a Powerlifting Competition. I Squated 135kg, Benched 92.5kg, and Deadlifted 170kg. The Powerlifting Competition was awesome fun and I am taking this sport more seriously now, and plan to compete again. My lifts may be low but the point is anyone can compete if they are willing to try and I did it with less than a years training, don't worry about beating others, just look to get some Prs!

I competed Raw (and without belt) for the second time in October 2010 at the GBPF SE Deadlift and pulled 200kg. Considering my previous best pull was 180kg that was a massive PR for me. I really enjoyed it and I am looking forward to competing further next year. It was also good to lift with SL Member Simon (page 135) and great to have his encouragement.

I'm heavier than I started by around 10kg, and if you look to 2007 I was 68kg which I feel was ridiculous for me now, I was too small really, I am more suited to more big and strong type of body, I don't need to look ripped just big, it suits my face I guess.

People at work have commented but when they realise what I have achieved they understand I'm not a fat guy, they can tell its muscle but the weight gain still scares people because its against the usual advice. I have had one guy state he would beat my whole team at work in armwrestling, but he's worried about me due to my size and strength – he does want to challenge me though! Although I was more "toned" to coin an incorrect yet popular phrase when I weighed 68kg, my wife does prefer me now Im larger – at the end of the day I look more manly, and I'm a man of tradition and feel men should be men.

I'm far more confident, the competition was a big factor for this as I had to go there and I knew nobody as I train alone, and then step up on the platform and lift with everyone watching. – I could do this at a drop of a hat now, I am incredibly confident at work and command a very confident presence so people often go to me for help etc.

The StrongLifts community are fantastic and have congratulated me on each step forward to encourage me further, picked me up when I was down, and offered help and advice if I had a training issue – as I train alone this is incredibly valuable to me. If I didn't have so many people following my log I probably wouldn't be where I am now, I have the SL community to thank for my progress. The fact that I always have someone, no wait a whole community, to turn to if I need advice keeps me here - its like a family. And just like a strong family you don't even have to ask for help, the advice, support and encouragement is delivered promptly so you are never without someone behind you pushing you forward.

If you want to get the same results as me, and don't think StrongLifts 5x5 would work my first response would be to ask you why - the reason being, is that there is no anecdotal, statistical or any other research or evidence to suggest that it would not work.

Secondly I would point out that the theory behind SL5x5 is not new, its tried and tested sports science, linear progression applied to full body workouts comprising of compound movements has been used by strength athletes, and in fact athletes in general for years. A magazine article promising abs in 4 weeks? I would go with years of experience over a cheap article thought up in an office.

SL5x5 works, its as simple as that. I no longer participate in BJJ but if I did I would perform a lot better, I would have more weight behind me first of all, and second I would have more strength and explosive power – that combined with technique would improve performance considerably. In terms of what I am doing now, it provided me with the base strength that allowed me to train for a powerlifting competition and take up the sport, while my training differs now I would not have started on this route without SL5x5.

-SL Member Leon aka "Wellhairedbeast", 26, UK.

"The difference is night and day. The best way to describe it is - I feel 'capable'"

My name is John, I'm from Cedar Rapids, IA where I work as an electrical engineer. About two and a half years ago I weighed about 175lbs at 6'0" and around 15% BF. I was not particularly active, although I played on a softball team and also did some cardio and light weight training (but never got any stronger with what I was doing). I basically ate whatever junk I felt like eating. I wasn't fat, but I definitely wasn't healthy.

I had been lifting since high school and the main reason would probably be low self-confidence. The problem was that the kind of lifting I was doing was completely ineffective so I never saw any changes in my body or got any stronger to raise my self-confidence. My training was upper body focused, consisted of a lot of machine work, was high-rep, and most importantly - I hardly ever increased the weight I was using. The result was that after going to the gym off and on for five years, my progress was essentially zero.

I wasn't actively looking for a new program, but I came across Stronglifts.com from a guest blog post by Mehdi on another website. I was immediately struck by the lack of BS on the Stronglifts website. And after reading through Mehdi's book, it just made sense to me. I had found the advice that I wasn't looking for, but really really needed.

I was a little unsure that my body was really capable of what StrongLifts 5x5 said I could do. At the time, 250lbs Squat seemed like an impossible amount of weight. But I didn't want to quit before I even started, so I gave it a chance.

John's Gains	05/21/2008 (Start SL5x5)	12/22/2008 (End 3x5)	Dec 2010 (current)	Gains so far...
Age	23y	23y	25y	
Body-weight (6'0")	175lb	195lb	180lb	
Deadlift	95lb	275lb	335lb	+240lb
Squat	65lb	230lb	295lb	+230lb
Bench Press	65lb	175lb	180lb	+115lb

The difference is night and day. The best way to describe it is I feel 'capable'—there is no physical task that I feel nervous about doing anymore. I play recreational volleyball and I can easily block guys who have six inches on me. I help my friends move and carry all their heavy stuff without worrying that I might drop it. I'm more comfortable with confrontation because I know what my body is capable of.

My clothes fit great - tight around the shoulders and chest, my butt fills out my jeans, and my arms fill my sleeves. I have excellent posture, not because I focus on it, but because that's what being strong does to you. Just last week a friend commented on an old picture of me and how much bigger I am now. I am friends with all the regular guys in the gym, but I still get looks when I squat or deadlift heavy or do weighted dips with 90lbs strapped to my waist. Last month a middle aged body builder (a pretty big guy) approached me after I had finished a set of deadlifts and complimented me for lifting heavy.

The number one mistake I made is not following the concept of progressive loading. You

cannot get stronger without lifting heavier weights than your body is used to. For years I wouldn't increase the weight I was lifting unless I was 'comfortable' with it. Basically I was letting myself be lazy, hoping that one day I would wake up magically be strong like the guys I admired. The great thing about StrongLifts 5x5 is that it forced me to push my comfort zone and allowed me to finally make progress.

My second mistake occurred after starting SL 5x5. I read that I should eat more to help recovery, which is true, but I took that to mean I should eat everything in sight. As a result I gained weight ended up with a lot more fat than I wanted which meant I had to cut my calories. Unfortunately the dieting stalled my lifting progress and eventually reversed some of the gains I had made. If I could do it over again I would not try to bulk so aggressively.

My third big mistake was switching programs too often. I got off to a good start doing SL5x5 for 6 months, then moving to 3x5 when I started stalling too often. Then instead of moving to 1x5, I decided to jump straight to StrongLifts Advanced, then Korte 3x3 all in the span of about a year. Not only do these programs begin with a deload period, they both progressed much more slowly than was necessary for someone with my level of strength.

Between my diet issues and program ADD, I probably lost a year's worth of solid gains. Looking back, my best strength gains came when I stuck with one program for longer than six months and ate just enough food for recovery. The two times that happened were StrongLifts 5x5, and now 5/3/1. There was a lot of wasted time in between where I screwed around with different programs and diet and got just about nowhere.

I've been a StrongLifts Member since I started StrongLifts 5x5 about two and a half years ago. I've seen the site and membership grow and evolve from a small blog and forum into the massive resource it is today. Most of my time is spent inside the community seeing what other Members are up to, their questions, and their training. The great thing that I see happening at StrongLifts is the essential information to get started weight training is being filtered, refined, and constantly revised to make it work better, the FAQs are kept updated to make sure that those questions are getting answered with good advice, and the StrongLifts Community is an ever-expanding source of training experience and knowledge.

Starting out, the advice and encouragement from StrongLifts Members on my training log inside the StrongLifts Community was invaluable. The truth is as beginners we are not all that different and having a group of people who have been through exactly what you are going through is an amazing resource. I keep a log inside the StrongLifts Community for many reasons: to look back at how far I've come - this can be incredibly motivating; to get advice from other StrongLifts Members who may be able to see things that hadn't occurred to me; as an example for other people to look at what has and has not worked for me so they can learn from my mistakes; finally, I use it as a back up to my hard copy training logs. If I ever lose those I can still go back to my online log.

Take a look at my training log, everything is out there, no secrets. Then take a look at the thousands of other training logs inside the StrongLifts Community, many of whom got better results than me. While you're at it read all the success stories. Now forget your excuses and just try the program. Go to the gym and do the first workout, two days later do the second workout, repeat, get strong.

-SL Member John aka "Baughmjk", 25, Cedar Rapids USA.

“At the powerlifting gym which had Mr Universe 2009 I received a nickname ‘the deceiver’. Lb for lb I was amongst the strongest in the gym.”



Asif, 22, Sheffield UK. Contracted consultant for software development. In 2008, whilst at University, I racked up some mega fat because I had a bad diet. I was a 36" waist, 5ft 9", circa 200lb. Body fat was extremely high. I got fat because I never ate proper meals. Instead my days would consist of biscuits, crisps, chocolates and takeaways. I went through phases that I would drop weight. But it was never permanent, I put it back on.

I went through a difficult phase in my life and my health deteriorated badly. I would go a couple of days without food. It was gastric related, where I would constantly experience heartburn that led to a very lethargic lifestyle. This continued throughout the first year of University and even though I would wear decent, expensive clothes, I looked like a mess.

When I moved away to do my Internship I decided to clean up my act. I mean completely. It was the first time I moved away from home. I was forced to make a change. I was not prepared to do it half-assed either. It was all or nothing. I was convinced I would succeed in every area. That I would be great in my field. That I would be strong. That I would lose weight. That I would look good. And all that? That it would be permanent. Giving up was not an option. As soon as I moved away, I joined a local University gym, changed my diet and learnt how to cook. Within a few weeks I started changing.

The first months my diet was all over the place. I went through periods where I cut my cals too much followed by times where I went through severe lack of motivation. I became impatient and I had crazy cravings which were so difficult to control. I occasionally allowed the odd treat to keep me going. I trained in some of the most unorthodox ways, changing my routine every 6-10 weeks. I used to go through a lot of sites gaining knowledge. Then I moved on to compounds such as Overhead Press, Squats and Pullups.

I found StrongLifts 5x5 on my quest in gaining more knowledge. I liked the content written up and the book was fantastic. You know when your innate disposition agrees with

something? That's how I felt with Mehdi's book. I also really liked Mehdi's attitude and ethos on training and his outlook in life.



The StrongLifts 5x5 program looked challenging. I'm a sucker for a challenge! My only concern was "how the hell was I going to Squat 3 times a week?!". I decided to try it because if you don't try it you'll never find out.

Asif's Gains	October 2008 (Start Training)	June 2009 (Start SL5x5)	August 2010 (Gains so far...)
Age	20y	21y	22y
Body-weight (5'9")	205lb	160lb	158lb
Waist	36"	31"	31"
Deadlift	/	215lb	418lb
Squat	/	187lb	418lb
Bench Press	/	132lb	242lb

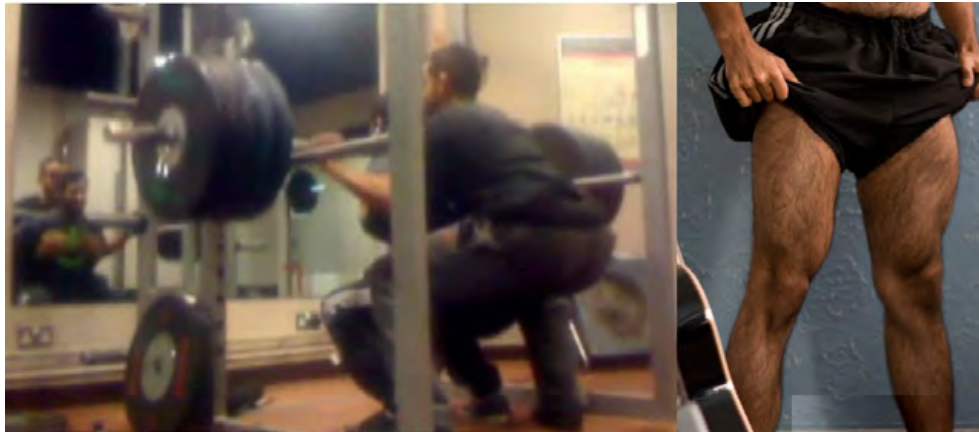
It's been an interesting journey to say the least. I cut from 15 stones to under 11 stones within a year. 47 pounds less fat and the strongest I've ever been. Anything can be achieved with determination. Especially to the fatties out there! People always comment on how good I look and cannot believe the change I've made. I've motivated a lot of people. I can wear any clothes I like and look great in them. Fitting well into suits/t-shirts and jeans. Losing fat cleared my skin condition – It was the most irritating form of skin discoloration and dried skin. It's now vanished. I feel very confident. I feel strong. Done seminars with hundreds of people present. I can confidently talk in large groups of people.

I used to be shy and feel intimidated by pretty girls. It's now the other way round. I have no qualms in talking to women anymore and when I walk I receive a lot of attention from girls and receiving that is one thing. I currently have a number of outstanding marriage proposals to attend to. Need I say more? Heh.

At the powerlifting gym I went to which had Mr Universe 2009 Dave Titterton I received a nickname 'the deceiver'. Lb for lb I was amongst the strongest in the gym. I can Squat and Deadlift 2.7*BW completely raw. I can Press my own weight. People come over and speak to me. It's pretty overwhelming to receive so much positive feedback from serious power lifters and bodybuilders. I receive a lot of respect and recognition. I'm more so impressed I started off on just the bar just under a year, training alone for the whole period and I've got

to this stage. I taught myself from no prior knowledge. I always stood by good form and left my ego at the door. I always found squatting difficult. I decided that I needed to overcome this.

I didn't realize how much stronger I had become. I can now do sports that I couldn't do before. I did rock climbing and I beat everyone, a 30ft wall in 21 seconds, left the competition by at least 9 seconds. Just found it so easy to lift my own weight. I was really impressed considering I'd never done it before!



I got so used to cutting calories, psychologically and physically I struggle to keep the 'bulk', I feel constantly full. I can eat a decent amount but it's the consistency, I eat very well on training days but on other days I just don't feel like eating as much but I force myself to eat even if I'm not hungry. I think it comes down subconsciously becoming fat again. Which can't really happen again because my lifestyle has changed so much but if it did get to that stage I'm so much more knowledgeable now, losing it wouldn't be as tough.

Mehdi wrote on his blog that training is more important than diet. I kind of discovered that earlier this year. At University, the final year was very busy and pressing. I used to resort to eating out a lot. This included coffee/cake shops, sandwich bars, takeaways etc. Don't get me wrong, I put in a lot of effort into packed lunches and a decent diet the majority of time but I used to feel really hungry, my expenditure of calories were going up. However, I was still breaking records. I was getting stronger and I wasn't putting any fat on.

I feel like I've broke a lot of barriers and myths in seeking out the truth. Fads don't work. Stupid diet pills don't work. What does work is learning how to eat, train and sleep. This process taught me patience. I'm proud of myself. Ever since I've now set a goal, I've always set out to achieve it. Because I know I can.

What have you got to lose in trying? You can be an ordinary gym rat or you could be StrongLiftsing gym rat. And trust me, there's a big difference.

-SL Member Asif aka "Darkshadow", 22, Sheffield UK.

“Being strong and confident will change your life in so many ways. There is no question: SL5x5 works.”

Hey, my name is Ray, and I'm 23 years old. I'm from a small town 45 minutes north of NYC, and I'm going to college at SUNY Oswego for Technology Education. Here's my story of going from being fat to being strong.

Beginning of 2008 – 20 years old, 200 pounds, and all chub. No kind of weight training or anything. Just eating poorly and not taking care of myself. I made the conscious decision to change this, because my sister had a child, and I realized that I wanted to be around for a long time to be around for her, and the rest of my family. Didn't want to be the fat uncle who couldn't run around and play.

July 1st, 2008 – My birthday. This was my goal. I weigh in at 164lbs at 5'9". 36lbs in half a year, not bad! I lost those by simply watching my calories and running/lifting weights. I recall eating lots of PB&J hahah. And I do remember, my goal was about 1,500 calories a day. I only ran 2 days a week, and never incredibly far, 2 miles at most. My “weight lifting” at this point was your average mish mash of not really knowing what I was doing. No compound lifts.

At this point I got most of my advice from Men's Health. I had read a few times that if you eat 500 calories under maintenance you'd lose weight, and that was my goal. Once I

- Bench – 165.

Time for pics. Isn't real without pics right? So the progression of the pics is exactly how I described above. January 2008, July 2008, today.



On the side shot, look at the top of my abs. They aren't flexed, but look at the difference from the middle, skinny shot, to the shot on the right after squatting and deadlifting for a few months! Stuff like that is awesome.



I honestly have never felt so good before. Being brutally honest, girls weren't too interested in talking to me when I was 200 pounds of chub. That has all changed. I've always known how to talk to girls and be myself, so the fact that I'm in shape and confident in my looks is just the icing on the cake.

Being strong and confident in yourself will change your life in so many ways. One funny example: I'm a Resident Assistant at my college. That basically means I'm in charge of a floor of residents at my school. Keeping them in line, taking care of roommate conflicts,

emergencies, enforcing alcohol policies etc. Everyone in my building tells me "Ray you are by far the most intimidating RA". That helps with the job! People are more likely to listen when a guy who looks strong and confident tells them to stop.

It was funny, because, when I came here to SUNY Oswego, I was already in shape. These people never knew me as the 200 pound chubby kid. It was actually weird to get used to. I've never had people ask me if I work at the gym before. And once again... it's cool when girls notice you, just by looking at you. Also, I just like being a useful human being. Being able to pick 350 lbs. up off the ground will definitely make you a more useful. (Been a volunteer firefighter since I was 16, plan on taking a test for a paid department soon.)

Also, this is something that might surprise you. I've had a lot of people bust my balls and poke fun at me for lifting weights. I went from people making fun of me for being fat, to people making fun of me for being a "meathead". It can be a bummer, especially when it's people who you thought of as good friends (this happened to me).

You need to realize you are doing this for YOU, and the ones who REALLY matter and no one else. If someone feels the need to poke fun at you for taking care of yourself and being dedicated to it, I guarantee they are jealous. That's the only reason people feel the need to tear others down.

IF this happens to you, just learn to not worry about what these people say. I'm not saying cross them off your friends list, just don't bother talking to them about it anymore. Chances are they'll never understand. What matters is you are dedicated to making yourself better, and the people who really matter, like your family and loved ones, will know this. These are the only people that matter anyways.

I'm happy with my results, but I wish I had found Stronglifts 5x5 sooner. Doing a 3x/week compound exercise program would have helped me lose the fat and would have given me a head start on the muscle mass. I made the mistake of switching program too early a few months ago, I hadn't maxed out my linear progression gains. And if you check my training log, I'm working on correcting this and going back to basics.

So if you are overweight/chubby like I was, or skinny and wanting to get more muscular, I would definitely recommend Stronglifts 5x5 as a starting block (and it will take you pretty far, milk it for as much as you can.) I never even played any sports seriously before this, and although I've got a long way to go, you can see from the pictures that Stronglifts made a huge difference. There is no question: It works.

-SL Member Ray, 23, NY USA

“SL5x5 works, follow it, see yourself in 6 months time and you’ll be amazed!”



My first name is Ronald, I'm 23 and from Indonesia. In 2007 I had a very sedentary lifestyle and ate a lot of junk foods, I was a student (University of Adelaide in Australia) and was very busy with all assignments and didn't do any sports. I was 172cm tall, weighed 68kg, was chubby and had a belly as well.

Then I decided to diet and workout. During that time I did random machine exercises, tried to do squats but I found they were too scary so I stuck with the smith machine. I ate very little, for example I ate one chicken pie and a sausage for dinner or sometimes a very small amount of rice and meat. As for my workout, I just did random things like machines, cardio, bicep curl, etc.

Fast forward to 2008 I've lost weight and weighed around 62kg. But I looked skinny which I didn't like, I wasn't happy with my physique and my girlfriend also encouraged me to bulk up. So I remember typing "can you lose fat and build muscle" and didn't find anything useful. Then I tried "build muscle lose fat" and found StrongLifts and that's when it all started.

At first I thought StrongLifts was like those random websites where programs are being sold and claim that you could build muscle in 4 weeks. But after I continued reading I realized that all the stuff really made sense. I decided to try StrongLifts 5x5 because I thought no harm trying, I didn't get any result from my previous approach anyway.

Being an "experienced" guy, I assumed that I knew what I was doing. So, instead of following SL5x5 strictly, I decided to change exercises, add exercises (bicep curl — can't

believe I actually did that, did 5×5 deadlift instead of 1×5, etc). I was hoping that I could build muscle faster by doing so. And I also wanted to have bigger biceps. I kept doing that and didn't really see any result until I decided to stop being an "experienced" weight lifter and just follow SL5x5 strictly on 10 September 2009. Looking back, I would just follow SL5x5 strictly instead of adding exercises, or adding extra set for deadlift.

Long story short, after 3-4 months I could actually see results! My arms, chest, quads, lats were bigger and it looks proportional and awesome!

Ronald's Gains	June 2009	July 2010	Gains so far...
Body-weight (6'0"	62kg	78kg	+16kg
Press	30kg	65kg	+35kg
Deadlift	55kg	180kg	+125kg
Squat	65kg	142,5kg	+77,5kg
Bench Press	70kg	97,5kg	+27,5kg

Now I look much better and feel much better about myself! People look at me, especially in Indonesia (mostly girls). My friend said I'm much more muscular and my physique is balanced, not only upper body. I also don't feel as lazy.

I keep promoting StrongLifts to all of my friends. One of my high school senior also asked me whether I did SL5x5 strictly, and I told him just follow it, don't add/change the exercises. Also, my friend is interested in working out and ask me for tips. I introduced him to SL5x5 and he's gonna start end of next month. Strength training has become my passion now.

For the chubby dude: SL5x5 works, follow it, take care of your diet, see yourself in 6 months time and you'll be amazed!

Thank you Mehdi for stronglifts.com and thanks for the wonderful StrongLifts Members who help me corrected my forms, answer my questions.

-SL Member Ronald aka "Gantengx", 23, Indonesia.

“People thought that I was going to the gym 6x a week because of my results. They were impressed when I told them I only go to the gym Mo/Wed/Fri.”

I joined the gym when I was 17 years old because I play football and my coach told me to gain weight and strength to play better. I did some “research” but didn’t know what I was looking for because I was unexperienced about weights, gym and all that. I got a BB routine via Internet...

I used to train 5x-6x a week. I was the typical guy in the gym that only curls and does bench. My BB routine did not include Squat and Deadlift, so that is the biggest mistake I did. I always left the Squat Rack alone and I used it only to do curls with the Olympic bar. Once or twice I did Squats and with horrendous form. Of course they were partial Squats ... honestly I hated Squats.

My biceps, triceps and shoulders got more “toned”. But my man boobs did not improve at all. My BB stats were not even impressive compared to my SL5x5 stats today. I never did more than 155 lbs in Bench (4×10). And I got pretty tired about training 5-6x a week so I quit weightlifting.

I found StrongLifts thanks to a friend that practices MMA. So first I read many blog posts and the forum and decided to start with SL5x5 because I found it interesting and why not give it a try. And so January 4th 2010 was my first day Squatting. Before SL5x5 I was not going to the gym for about 6-7 months.

I started SL5x5 to get rid of my damn man boobs and they are finally going away. My abs and traps are starting to show up too. Went down from 220 to 202lbs and gained muscle finally. In only 5 months I got the physique above.

I know it is not very impressive, but I have the results I’m happy with. I feel great with my body changes and people started to notice when I was in my second month into SL5x5. I didnt like my body because my man boobs and love handles but now I can be shirtless

and not get embarrassed like before.

Edgar's Gains	January 2010	June 2010	Gains so far...
Body-weight (6'0"	220lbs	202lbs	-18lbs
Body-fat	23%	18%	-5%
Deadlift	125lbs	290lbs	+165lbs
Squat	95lbs	280lbs	+185lbs
Bench Press	120lbs	225lbs	+105lbs

People who don't believe that SL works should give it a try and they definitely will love it and will not stop doing it when they see their own results. And nothing better than 3x a week that's the best of all. People thought that I was going to the gym 6x a week because of my results. They were impressed when I told them I only go to the gym Mo/Wed/Fri.

I recommend SL5x5 100% because it changed my life in only 3 months, my physique got better so my self-esteem got higher thanks to StrongLifts.

-SL Member Edgar Barahona, 21, Hermosillo Mexico.

“People who haven’t seen me for a long time are often impressed by my transformation”



My name is Georgiy. I’m a 21 year old Russian guy from Vancouver. I’m a student and I work part-time.

In high school I let my body become weak and plebeian because I stopped swimming and playing basketball. My diet has always been alright, so it was mostly sitting around that contributed to my poor shape, I got too into computers. One day I had a moment of clarity, like Hamlet in his third soliloquy, and started acting after inspecting myself in the mirror. I saw that I had let myself slip, and I felt the urge to become fit.

I started running every day the summer of 2005, and lost about 20lbs (230lbs to 210lbs). That school year, I still ran, but it wasn’t every day. Just whenever I could. In the summer of 2006 I ran longer and more consistently. I remember the early 6am mornings, heading down to the lake and spending hours on the trail. When I started school after that summer, I weighed 165lbs. Some of my classmates didn’t recognize me. In two summers I completely transformed myself. I lost 65 lbs because of consistent running (230lbs to 165lbs) in about 1.5 years. To this day this is one of my biggest accomplishments.

After graduation, I remained at 160-170 lbs until the Summer of 2009. I was doing a lot of swimming in lakes and oceans during that summer. The community center I went to had a pool and a weightroom, so I began going to the weightroom before my swims. At first I just got used to the equipment. I knew basic workouts from high school gym class, so I did things like curls, bench, leg press, etc. Shortly thereafter, it became a routine.

I found out about Starting Strength because I wanted to learn how to squat properly. I started reading literature online, some of which came from Stronglifts. After I moved gymnasiums I started talking with StrongLifts Member KIB (page 171), who I met there. He recommended starting a log on SL. I weighed the pros and cons, and soon I was a StrongLifts Member instead of a reader.

Around the same time, I switched over to 5x5 from the version of Starting Strength I was doing. I had to deload because the volume was much greater. I didn’t have many concerns about it. I just knew I had to keep strict form and not get too ahead of myself. In the pursuit of strength, or anything for that matter, you really have to push yourself to be consistent.

July 9th, 2010.

- 186lbs. 21y. 5'11"
- Back squat: 255 5×3, 270×1, 225×12
- Deadlift: 300×1
- OHP: 120 5×5
- Bench: 160 5×5

I was about 165lbs when I started. Now I'm 186lbs. I love the weight gain. I know that muscle and strength is behind it. I don't recall my starting numbers exactly, but I can say a few things about my strength.

- I had trouble doing three pull-ups. Now I'm able to do sets of ten.
- I couldn't bench press 135lbs for ten repetitions. Now this feels easy.
- I struggled to overhead press 95lbs. Now I could do it with 135lbs.

I love the carry over into other aspects of life. For example, I love biking. The added leg strength allows me to zip around the city with fantastic speed and ease. Moreover, as a man, I like feeling power. Even though we're not body builders, strength training programmes make your body look tremendously better. Mentally, I feel sharper, and I live with training at the back of the mind. This makes me sleep and eat better, and I drink less alcohol because it's detrimental to my training.

While I mildly regret not commencing weightlifting at the same time as running, this is the path I'm on and I'm happy with it. If I had the chance to start training from the very beginning, I would have started strength training at the same time as jogging back in 2005. An extra four years of training under my belt would have been pleasant. I recommend both to people who ask me for fitness advice. The combination of strength training and endurance cardio produces results that are more solid than just running alone. I prefer lifting to running at this point because a lot of my life revolves around that. However, my ability to run has greatly improved. I think this is mainly because of squats and deadlifts.

People who know me don't say much anymore, but they do notice me getting bigger once in a while (even when I don't notice myself). People who haven't seen me for a long time are often impressed by my transformation. It's not just weight loss anymore. My proportions illustrate my commitment to training..

The StrongLifts community is great. Keeping a log allows me to track my progress and receive valuable comments and information. Because you're not limited to just one point of view, it's like having tailored personal training advice, but from many sources. The SL community has many competent members who share the passion for lifting, and are more than willing to assist you by sharing their knowledge.

If you want results, you need to be consistent with the programme. Educate yourself, find balance in your life, and never give up because of hardships. Remember that progress takes time, and that you should enjoy the process.

-SL Member Georgiy aka "Nikolaevich", 21, BC, Canada

“I never thought I would be able to do half the things I do now. StrongLifts transformed my life”



I was always a fat child and always hated the fact. I used to wonder why I was fat and say to myself I would eat right the coming Monday and lose the weight. Well i got to the age of 21 and realized that I hadn't done anything about my weight at all.

One day a friend of mine who was quite strong got me to join a gym and i started to go as often as i felt like. I got a routine of a gym instructor who told me to do a load of cardio to lose the weight. At the point of starting this i was 210lbs at 5'11". After 6 months of this i had lost 7lbs and was quite happy with myself. However I hated cardio and so eventually stopped doing it.

This is when 5x5 came on to the scene. I found the site on a google search and started to read everything I could about what was on the site. I read all the nutritional information, the weight lifting techniques and even some of the social forums. This site transformed my life.

I have now been lifting for 10 months and my lifts have all stalled to the point of me going onto StrongLifts Intermediate. However this is the progress I made on 5x5.

Ben's Gains	Jan 2009 (pre-training)	July 2009 (6 Months Cardio)	July 2010 (12 Months SL5x5)
Age	23y	23y	23y
Body-weight (5'11")	210lbs	203lbs	168lbs
Body-fat	29%	?	11.1%
Squat	/	Cardio Only	140kg for 5
Deadlift	/	Cardio Only	140kg for 5
Bench Press	/	Cardio Only	85kg for 5

I never thought I would be able to do half the things I do now. I have always wanted to

start breaking but never had the drive or the strength. Now I have both and as you can see it requires a lot of functional body strength.

I am also a lot more confident now than I was a year ago. I am able to wear what I want and not worry how I look as well as being able to go up to girls and talk to them on an equal level. My friends have nothing but complements for me and the ones I haven't seen for a year or two can't believe the change in my physical appearance as well as my general presence.

This didn't all come over night though and there were sometimes when I felt like giving up however the StrongLifts Community always had helping words to help encourage me. I remember when I was struggling to Squat due to bad form and SL Members were quick to point out where I needed to sort my form out within several hours of me posting a video. Personal trainers aren't even this quick or educated. I am also inspired by the posts that people put on the site. I want to squat 180kg because I know there are StrongLifts Members out there who can. So if they can why cant I?

Thanks very much to everyone inside the StrongLifts Community for the knowledge you have given me and the inspiration i needed when i felt down. Also I cannot thank Mehdi enough for making this site what it is. You have changed my life for the infinite better and I have nothing but gratitude and respect for you.

-Stronglift Member Ben H aka "B3n", 23, Lancashire United Kingdom.

“Lifting heavy is so much more motivating and enjoyable than repetition work.”



I am 24 years old, originally from Michigan currently living in Chicago, and I work in quality control for a packaging distributor. I first started lifting in 2003 to be more competitive in high school soccer. I saw how much bigger all the college players were and realized I needed to be stronger.

I lifted weights 3 days a week in an upper/lower split with 2 days being upper and 1 day being lower starting out. The upper body was a mix of benching (flat, incline, and decline), seated and standing pressing, bent over and upright rows, and the usual bicep/tricep work. The lower body was back squatting, leg press machine, and leg curls/extensions. I did no deadlifting. All of this was the usual 3-4 sets of 8-10 rep variety. I used nothing to gauge progress at this point in terms of lifting.

Then from 2004-2008 I pretty much did the same exercises (with more machines involved because of their availability in the university weight room) and set/rep scheme. I changed my scheduling though so I worked out more often, sometimes 7+ days straight, as I used working out as a way to clear my head after classes and studying. I stuck with the upper-lower-upper pattern though since it was what I was familiar with. It wasn't until late 2007 that I finally started deadlifting on my lower body days.

From 2003 to 2008 I went from 150lbs to 178lbs at 5'11". I have no idea what the body fat percentages were, but I know I was skinny, even at 178.

- Squat – 95lbs to 315lbs
- Bench – 65lbs to 245lbs
- DL – Started in 2007. I didn't max out but I did get up to 275 for 5.

For this entire period I never had any goals in terms of lifting. I just enjoyed doing it and put in as much effort as I could while I was in the weight room. Most of the time, especially while in college, I worked out under time constraints so I would do 15 or so exercises in

less than an hour and a half.

After college I decided that I needed to add some purpose to all the lifting I was doing. I decided to do a powerlifting competition, and after I looked at some of the numbers being put up in the 181 weight class I wanted to be stronger to do it.

So I googled “strength training” and StrongLifts.com popped up along. I actually liked it from the start in terms of logical progression. It helped me to establish goals and set up a path to obtain them. It was only different for me at first in that I still had the mentality of “if a little is good more is better” when it came to lifting. My thinking on getting stronger was still add more sets, reps, or exercises. After about a month on SL5x5 that thinking went away.

The structure of StrongLifts 5x5 seemed like a good place to start for obtaining the goals I had set for myself, which was to get stronger for my first powerlifting meet. I ran SL5x5 for a little over 2 months, and the main thing it reminded me of is that progress should always be the goal. Like many people in the gym, I went for so long without seeing much in the way of results that that’s exactly what I started to expect.

Two years after starting out with StrongLifts5x5 I am 198lbs with a 446lbs squat, 315lbs bench, and 500lbs deadlift with a lot of improvement still to make. Lifting heavy is so much more motivating and enjoyable than repetition work. I can see progress in terms of weight on the bar and it keeps me motivated every time I step in the gym.

My current goals in powerlifting are to squat and deadlift over 600lbs in single ply gear (current best single ply squat is 505 for two reps) and to bench over 400lbs in a single ply shirt, all in the 220lbs weight class. After I hit those goals I’ll just add 50lbs to each and try to hit those. At some point I would like to do one or two Olympic lifting competitions just to challenge myself in a different way, but that’s a few years down the road.

The StrongLifts Community is an atmosphere of improvement. It helps me in that everyone has the same goal of getting stronger. You just can’t sift through training logs of Members getting better and looking to get better without wanting to get better yourself.

You have to believe StrongLifts 5x5 can work. If you don’t believe it can work then you won’t try because you actually don’t want it to work. You start out with the mindset of trying to validate that original belief. Even if you are not aware of it. So you have to believe it will work. Whatever reason you using to tell yourself it won’t you need to find a way around, and that’s where the SL community helps a lot. You work hard over time and it will work.

There is not a whole lot you can say to persuade someone it works because the whole idea of the program is about doing, and there are plenty of StrongLifts Members who have done the doing.

-SL Member Dave aka “LiftingNerd”, 24, Chicago USA.

“Although there are some things I won’t be able to do because of my heart attack and being on medication for the rest of my life, getting strong isn’t one of them.”



I am a soldier with the Australian Army. The job means I am obviously fairly active to begin with. In January 07 I started getting into body building style weight lifting with my best man. It was going fairly well, both lifting heavy stuff, and general physical preparation through compulsory PT (basically conditioning circuits and endurance). I don't have any stats from the time, except for my basic fitness assessment (70 pushups in one go, 100 sit ups unassisted, 9:00 min 2.4 km run).

All was going well until April 07 when I was diagnosed with Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma, and started Chemotherapy immediately. It was the most terrible experience of my life. I had over 15 unplanned hospitalizations in 5 months, including, amongst other things; a blood clot in a vein in my brain, losing 4.5 L of blood in one morning due to a tear in my throat (and being on blood thinners for the clot), and a major heart attack (caused by another clot, despite being on blood thinners), so now my heart is only around 75% of what it used to be. I lost over 15 kg in the first month, from being fit and estimated 12% body fat at 83 kg, 183 cm, 23 years old.

I have now been in remission for over 2 years. I haven't pushed myself to get back to my previous level, mainly due to laziness. I deployed to Afghanistan in June 09, and after about two months of no exercise at all, I decided to do something about it. However, I soon got frustrated with what I was doing (pretty much random body building style work outs I decided on once I got to the gym). I stumbled upon Stronglifts at just the right time.

The book opened my eyes to a completely different way of training. I wasn't even aware there was a sport called strength training. The whole idea of training strength instead of 'pump' was like an epiphany. I found the idea of training the movement, not a muscle, highly attractive.

Luke's Gains	Sep 2009	Oct 09	Best 2010
Age	26y	26y	27y
Body-weight (6')	168lb	176lb	187lb

Luke's Gains	Sep 2009	Oct 09	Best 2010
Deadlift	132lb	264lb	401lb
Squat	137lb	242lb	308lb
Bench Press	104lbs	159lb	220lb

As you can imagine, I am very happy with the results, both strength and physique wise. It has rekindled my desire to keep my body in tip top condition. Although there are some things I won't be able to do at work because of my heart attack and being on prescription medication for the rest of my life, getting strong and conditioned isn't one of them. I know I will be able to play sport with my son when he grows up.

Thank you Mehdi for being the catalyst for my transformation. I have since done a lot more reading about strength, general exercise and nutrition. Although your ideas aren't new, the way you have put it all together means the program exceeds the sum of its parts. Your articles are relevant and informative, and you make it easy to understand concepts. You have given me the 'bug' to see bigger and bigger numbers go up. I hope to have my wife start lifting once I get my home gym set up, and I recommend StrongLifts 5×5 to anyone who asks. For anyone who is thinking "I can't do that, I'm too unfit and too fat" please reconsider. I hope my story will change your mind.

-StrongLifts Member Luke aka "Knotted", 27, Australia.

“I never thought I could achieve these stats, and I owe it all to Stonglifts, Mehdi’s advice, and the inspiring stories of SL Members”

Hi from the Netherlands,

After 12 weeks of following StrongLifts 5x5, I thought I’d do my fare share to convince you boys in doubt of this program’s success that it really does work. So much even, that it may lead to one or more embarrassing but very satisfying moments you’ll remember for quite some time. Here’s my story.

I started doing Stronglifts 5x5 late December 2009 after a period of about 2 months where I was very ill and lost a lot of strength.....if you can even speak of strength after one year of running and no strength training. During that year I didn’t bother counting calories and eating healthy, I just ate when I felt like it. Basically ran 3 times a week with distances varying between 5 and 15 km.

After those two months I looked in the mirror and said to myself something has to change. At that moment I was about 74kg at 1,80m.....all fat, no muscles. Struggled to lift an empty bar for 5 reps on the OHP and I couldn’t even beat my girlfriend at “wrestling”.

Now, to me this was very degrading, because previous to the year of running I used to do strength training. No program, just whatever I felt like doing. Back then I weighed about 80kg and could OHP 40kg quite easily. So you might understand the disappointment when struggling with 20kg! This only stimulated me to work even harder on SL5x5!

I remembered reading about StrongLifts 5x5 on the internet and guys having some serious results with the program. So I decided to buy me a powercage with 20kg barbell and 120 kg of plates, and started the routine. In addition to just training, I also upped my caloric intake to about 3500-4000kcal a day, and tried to get at least 8-9 hours of sleep a day.

I started seeing results after the first few weeks, but felt results after the first workout....I could hardly walk for three days. I guess my body wasn’t used to the stress. I loved it!

About ten weeks into the program, and only missing 2 workouts, I had a very embarrassing moment which showed proof of the program’s success: I’m a consultant, and had to give a training to about 20 project managers and financials. I started early that morning, making some preparations. Picked up the power cord of the beamer, bent over to plug it in, and that’s when it happened.....craaaaaaackkkk. O SH*T

Now, I noticed my pants getting a little tight, but didn’t think this would happen. A 15 cm crack at the back of my pants, no way to switch pants before the start of the training, and the first guests started to enter the room. Thank god I wasn’t wearing my pink boxers.

Now I do by no means have a big butt, actually I never really had a butt. Right now however I feel i can crack a walnut with my butt cheeks.....never tried it of course

Though this was a very embarrassing moment, the feeling that was much stronger was

that of satisfaction. My training really did pay off, and I owe it all to Stonglifts, Mehdi's advice, and the inspiring stories of SL Members. Although Mehdi, to be fair, you do owe me a new pair of pants.

Remko's Gains	Dec 2009	Mar 2010	Aug 2010	Gains so far...
Age	29y	29y	29y	
Body-weight (6'0")	74kg	83kg	85kg	+11kg
Deadlift	40kg	120kg	160kg	+120kg
Squat	30kg	101kg	121kg	+91kg
Bench Press	20kg	75kg	95kg	+75kg

I feel great. Never thought I could achieve these stats. Though there not so high compared to most SL Members, I'm extremely satisfied with the results. And this was only twelve weeks. My body is starting to show some nice muscle development. I even notice differences in everyday life when picking things up like a crate of beer, or a chair to carrying the groceries. Sure, I can't run 15km anymore... who cares! I am stronger, I look stronger, and I feel amazing!

To anybody wondering if SL5x5 is going to work for them I'd say just to give it a try. Work hard at it for at least 12 weeks, and eat/sleep well. Didn't work for you, then quit. But I can guarantee you'll be hooked, and completely amazed with the results.

I would again like to thank you all for sharing your wonderful stories and advice, especially Mehdi. You've changed my life. I feel healthier and stronger then ever. Thanks!

-SL Member Remko aka "Fritso", 28, NL.

“The most profound changes have been mental. It rekindled a sense of accomplishment, developed feelings of self-worth and grew my confidence”



I'm Ben, 31 years old and live in New Zealand with my wife and 2 daughters. I'm originally from Canada but moved here several years ago. I work from home as a software developer.

As a child, I grew up very quickly. At 12 yo I was 6' tall and your typical lanky teen. Around then I got sick, couldn't eat anything for months and was hospitalized. By the time I was back home, I was all skin and bones. This led to me becoming increasingly anxious about my body image. The word "skinny" gained a deeply negative connotation and I avoided being photographed.

About this time I became confused about my size. According to BMI, which they taught us at school, I was perfectly normal yet I was very skinny and weak. I also learned that anything with fat or cholesterol is bad, I should limit my meat intake, the majority of my diet should consist of grains (according to the Canada Food pyramid at the time), I needed to limit my portion sizes, etc. I wish someone would have sat down with me and just said "listen, you're a big guy and you're active - you need to eat a lot more then you do now"

When it came to training, the old me came up with a million of excuses to not even get near a gym. I would tell myself "the gym equipment doesn't fit my height" or "I'm actually strong, I just don't look it". Reality was:

- I was afraid of being judged. I had no confidence.
- I couldn't ask for help because I was anxious talking to strangers.
- I would have to admit I didn't know and, back then, I knew EVERYTHING.

Fast forward to 2008: I was 29 years old, 6'5" and about 80kg. Much had improved in life but I still had the problems with body image and physical well-being. I was weak and completely out of shape. Sure, I had a flat stomach but you could see my ribs around my clavical and I had no pecs. I had a terrible job and was trapped in the rat-race. My 30th birthday loomed and I started feeling depressed. I knew I had to do something. The turning point was a new job. I work from home and my employer paid for a gym

membership. They wanted to ensure I got out of the house. When I signed up I received some free sessions with a personal trainer. He gave me a basic workout and I dug into it with immense enthusiasm. When I started at the gym I:

- Couldn't bench the bar (20 kg)
- Could barely jog for a few minutes
- Had a hard time squatting a 10kg bag on my back

My original routine consisted of exercises using machines and dumbbells: leg press, seated smith press, lat pull down, etc. All for high reps, low volume. I tried creating my own routine out of bits and pieces I found but I didn't really understand what I was doing. Looking back, it was a bodybuilding routine.

Three months later I had gone from 80kg to 89kg. I also got stronger! But trouble was brewing... I had plateaued on many of the exercises. I knew I had to change my routine but most websites did not have information aimed at the near-absolute beginner. In hindsight, everything I found was related to bodybuilding and I was deeply confused about all the supplements out there.

I was on Digg and in the comments for an article, I saw mention of Stronglifts. There was so much information freely available and I could understand it! I liked the SL 5x5 routine as it was simple and all the exercises were well explained. Best of all, I didn't need expensive supplements to succeed.

Shortly after I started Stronglifts, I noticed Mehdi offered private coaching. I wanted results, felt I had a lot to learn and thought that he could fast-track my progress. I started being coached by Mehdi on May 15th 2008 weighing 89kg. To lose the skinny look, Mehdi recommended we aim for a 100kg bodyweight. He suggested I do GOMAD to increase my calorie intake. On average, I was eating 6-7000 kcals with my record being 9118 calories.

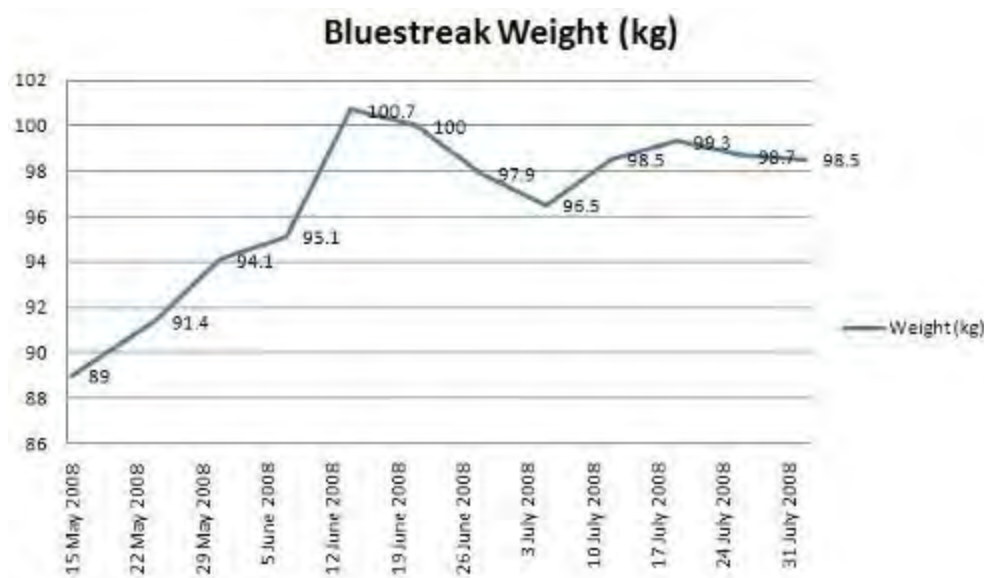
Ben's Gains under Mehdi's Coaching	May 15th 2008 (Start coaching)	June 9th 2008 (25 days later)	Gains
Age	29y	29y	
Body-weight (6'5")	196lbs	221lbs	+25lbs
Body Fat	12%	15%	+3%
Lean Body Mass	172lbs	188lbs	+16lbs (+65%)
Fat Mass	24lbs	33lbs	+9lbs (+35%)

I achieved my goal weight 25 days later: I gained 11kg! That brought me to 100.7 kg at 15% BF. In 4 months I gained 20kg (80kg in mid Feb 2008). Comparing my results:

- Old routine: bodybuilding split, 5-6x week, 1-2 hours. Gained about 10kg in 3 months. Too many exercises, too many machines involved, no clear progression path, nutrition wasn't clear
- New routine: SL5x5, 3x week, 1 hour. Gained 11kg in 25 days. Really enjoy the routine, love doing big compound lifts and clear sense of progression in SL and beyond, nutrition was sorted. Sold!

The weight I gained doing GOMAD and SL5x5 was about 65% LBM, 35% body fat. After I finished GOMAD, I went down to 98 kg (turns out it was mostly due to water retention

because of the high sodium in milk). I continued to gain weight and maintained a bodyweight of 100 kg for a long time.



Since GOMAD, I've tried eating a similar amount of calories without milk and found it much harder. I also remember getting a sore jaw! Milk is liquid and calories - it's easy to consume. Best of all, it's relatively cheap, calorie-dense and is a natural whole food. To this day, I consume about 2 litres post-workout. All those calories help recovery and, ultimately, allow you to progress faster.

Ben's Gains	Feb 2008	Mar 2008	Dec 2008	Gains so far
Age	29y	29y	29y	
Body-weight (6'5")	176lbs	195lbs	226lbs	+50lbs
Deadlift	/	88lbs	330lbs	+242lbs
Squat	/	55lbs	330lbs	+275lbs
Bench Press	/	88lbs	176lbs	+88lbs

I've told other people about my weight gain. Most seem to think that I'm on some kind of drug(s) and/or a crazy workout regime (i.e. 7 days a week). I can understand why some people are hesitant when you see all the supplement/bodybuilding stuff out there. To think that results can come from training 3x week for about an hour, combined with plain old milk and healthy food... if only I knew this when I was younger!

The most profound changes have been the mental aspect. All that heavy lifting and big eating put me on the path to self improvement. It rekindled a sense of accomplishment, developed feelings of self-worth and grew my confidence. I also learned the importance of tenacity (don't give up!).

At work, I stepped up and starting doing something I once considered my idea of hell: sales! Having to talk to people you didn't know (i.e. cold calls), being outside your comfort zone, dealing with rejection, etc. The key element that has enabled me to do this is confidence.

While I continued to lift and do well in many aspects in life, I slowly started to lose balance between the three pillars in my life: family, work and training. Work became the priority and I put ever-increasing amounts of time into it (so easy to do, when you work from home). I also struggled to adapt with changes in my daily routine (no more morning sessions when daughter started school), and, eventually, my gym shutting down. I used that as an excuse to stop lifting altogether and pile even more time into my work. By Christmas, I was burnt out and started feeling depressed. I also started to get sick, starting with bursitis in my elbow and culminating with pneumonia, for which I was hospitalized for a few days. Those 8 months, between stopping lifting and getting out hospital, was the worse period of my life.

A few weeks out of hospital, I had recovered enough to return to work. Doctors told me I had to do exercise/cardio to rebuild lung capacity. A week or two out of hospital, I was contacted by Mehdi to write my story - what you're reading now. That same day I signed up and got back into training. I set out a new routine with my family and started SL 5x5 with some running. Much to my surprised, I remembered a lot: from mobility exercises to setup on the core lifts.

While I started with low weights, they quickly shot up. 5 weeks later, I regained 5 kg (back up to 100 kg) and was deadlifting 100 kg. Two months later I was squatting 100 kg. I'm continuing to progress, having recently conquered a Squat at 155kg and Deadlift at 165kg at 104kg bodyweight. I'm also hitting new PRs on the bench, OHP.

Thanks to my time being coached by Mehdi, I got results faster than I would by myself. I feel the advice I got was coming from someone that had extensive practical experience and yet had a wide body of knowledge sufficient to tailor programs so they were appropriate to the person i.e. for fat loss, weight gain, strength, etc. Overall, it was money well spent - a great investment that gave me a solid foundation. I also learned that it's OK to ask for help.

Since I've been training, I've always kept a log. My first logs were just bits of paper. Since then, I've kept my log online, inside the StrongLifts Community. I've always believed that one of the keys to success is to associate with like minded people that have achieved varied degrees of success. Ideally, we could be training partners or even train in the same gym. The Stronglifts Community is the next best thing. I've got that sense of camaraderie and have found a place to share my triumphs, failures and everything in between (family and friends just don't understand or sometimes just don't care).

If you want to achieve similar results: accept that the status quo isn't working. You need to make changes. SL 5x5 and GOMAD work. Think you know better? You don't. If you did, you wouldn't be in this situation. Just do it. Don't take any short cuts or modify it in any way. Be ambitious and don't let anything or anyone get in the way of accomplishing it.

Thank you Mehdi for setting me on the path to strength.

-SL Member Ben aka "Bluestreak", 31, Wellington New Zealand.

“Everyone says how good I look compared to years ago. I eat better, feel so much stronger and have quit taking drugs.”

My life was quite aimless prior to lifting to be honest. I tinkered with a few “bodybuilding pump programs” you know the type, wrist curls and an abdominizer machine, supersets and various other exercises. But I could never build any muscle and ended up quitting and staying skinny. At that time I was 32 years old. BW was around 145lbs; strength was zero.

It was hard as being 6ft 2” tall and weighing in at 145lbs was demoralizing as I could hear people laughing at me and commenting about my size; Of course it was hard to date women as my confidence was never that great. I turned to heavy usage of marijuana to ease the pain and ended up eating unhealthy food in the process. I knew I had to do something about my situation I was tired of being skinny and longed to be stronger, my attitude had to change. I knew that weight training worked in order to bulk up I just did not have the formula for it. I thought I could never get big maybe because of genetics.

I done bodybuilding type routines and then when this was not working for me, I moved onto BW exercises. By doing the bw exercises I did gain weight but It was mainly fat from a junk food diet. Unhappy with my weight gain and no muscles I stumbled upon StrongLifts back in May 2008 after looking at a blog on Pull ups and how to do them weighted.

I wasn’t convinced at first as the 5 sets and 5 reps differed from what I was told as a past bodybuilder. You know supersets, triceps kickbacks, I mean I never even tried Deadlifts so you can imagine how daunting it was. Plus guys I knew got big using steroids.

My greatest concern with SL5x5 was the Squat as many “big guys” in my local gym had told me not to squat so low as it could hurt my knees. I had never done Squats or Deadlifts as a bodybuilder so I wanted to make sure the sl5x5 routine was legitimate before I started the program. It wasn’t until I read the story of StrongLifts Member Michael (page 132) about how squats cured his knee pain that he had had for years that it set my mind at ease about the whole knee issues. I was tired of the way I looked and after looking at testimonies of other SL Members I gave it a go.

I started StrongLifts 5x5 back in Aug 2008. My first months were amazing, it’s no lie. I could feel my body changing and I read all of the articles on the website over and over and printed out many to take to the gym so I had some cues as to how to perform all the major lifts. I also started the GOMAD cycle and that really made me put on weight fast. I liked the philosophy of SL5x5. I think this ethos worked for me, it allowed me to focus on weight on the bar, rather than how big my biceps looked. When I squatted for a few weeks something wonderful started to happen! I stopped caring about my biceps and started caring about my body as a whole, as a unit. This is why I changed to SL5x5 I was a weakling and I got my wake up call.

I started SL 5×5 on the 19th August 2008 and ended in late July 2009. I had gained 34lbs by May 2009 or in 9 months. Before StrongLifts BW 184lbs – after StrongLifts 218lbs. I never measured body fat as it was irrelevant for myself since I was coming from a skinny background I was just happy to bulk up.

Roy's Gains	August 2008	July 2009	Nov 2010	Gains so far...
Age	32y	33y	35y	
Body-weight (6'2")	184lb	218lb	220lb	+36lb
Deadlift	40kg	145kg	185kg	+145kg
Squat	20kg	120kg	140kg	+120kg
Bench Press	42,5kg	90kg	100kg	+57,5kg

What can I say! The whole system works you really have to follow it to the tee. I did not add any exercises and I did not take away. I done exactly what the program called for. You really have to Squat that much and do all the flexibility work that comes with it.

I feel great today; the StrongLifts 5x5 program has set me up for a healthy future in strength training. Everyone says how good I look compared to years ago. I eat better, feel so much stronger and have quit taking drugs. I also got married in September 2010 and my wife likes my new physique. Now my life has some purpose and I owe all of this to SL5x5 it really has given me the discipline I need to continue to be healthy.

Having a log is paramount for making this work. Having an online log is even better; the constant posts of other StrongLifts Members will stay with me for years. It really helps to have the odd criticism as well as this makes sure you stay on the program SL5X5 for as long as possible. I cannot stress the importance of sticking with things even when it gets tough, this will forge character and discipline which will help you outside of the gym as well.

If you were skinny like me I would suggest you follow StrongLifts 5x5 for 6 months straight. Do not deviate from what is written down. Follow the sets and reps. Do not listen to anyone talking about high rep sets, etc, stick to the program. Read up on exercise execution and flexibility work. Drink and eat every three hours. Make full fat milk your best friend. Bring milk every where with you in a flask. Cook your own food. Go to an "All you can eat place" from time to time, it worked for me. Once you reach your desired weight, you should know what to do. The program works it really is that simple. You must Squat that much as well, learn all that you can about it. It makes you tough.

Check out my old StrongLifts 5x5 log for proof that this strength training program works.

-StrongLifts Member Roy aka "Rere", 34, Leeds, England.

“I am in the best shape of my life, which is something I keep saying because my shape keeps getting better.”



Neil, from London UK, I work as a salesman selling financial software to banks. Involves a lot of traveling (>70% of my time) and a lot of eating crap in airports, hotels and etc.

I was relatively sporty as a kid, quite a good runner, decent at track and field events, and into rowing for a few years before I started University. I was also ridiculously skinny – at six foot one I weighed about 150lbs. Then I went to University and pretty much gave up sport, except for the odd game of football or cricket for the College team. I also started to head out partying every night, ate all sorts of crap and piled on weight. When I left University I started work as a broker, where you were out most nights of the week entertaining clients, sat at a desk for 12 hours a day, eating anything fried and greasy and drinking most evenings. By the age of 25 I was 210lbs and seriously out of shape (>30% body fat).

I'd spent about 6 months working in South Africa when 25, and had piled on the pounds. Everyone who saw me commented on how fat I'd become. I hadn't noticed – even though I'd been putting on a pound of fat a week, you don't see it gradually accrue on your body. I also started seeing an old flame in a long distance relationship, so between seeing her (about 12 weeks) I decided to lose the fat and get back in shape.

I joined a gym near work, and recruited a personal trainer. He wasn't as bad as most of them, and when I told him I wanted to put on muscle he advised me to do squats, deadlifts plus a bunch of work on the various weight machines. I'd been a member of a gym for most of my 20's, but had always gone in without a plan, doing curls and benching etc – this time I had a plan. I also swam every morning before work for an hour. The weights were 3-4 sets of 8-10 reps, there was no real progression in weight, and I squatted (half squats) about 70kgs, and could deadlift about 80kgs.

After the 12 weeks I'd lost a lot of fat (about 14lbs) and put on muscle – I looked much

better. Unfortunately I then viewed that as “job done” and subsequently stopped the swimming and training. My gym visits got less and less frequent, I used to hate the DOMS I got from squatting too, so I dropped squats completely. My training reverted to the same sort of random weight lifting as I’d done before.

About a year later I decided to drop gym membership altogether, as it was overly expensive given how little use I made of it. I bought a bike and started to cycle to work instead (13 mile round trip). I figured this would keep me in shape, but it just made me more hungry so I ate more every meal. I stayed about 200 lbs and was fat, even though I didn’t think I looked that bad.

I changed jobs in August 2008, and the new job I took didn’t have changing facilities for me to shower after my cycle ride to work. Given that I had to join a gym anyway, I figured I’d look for a routine to follow. I have no idea what I typed into Google, but I found Stronglifts and started to read up on it. The exercises made sense – after all my brother had been into weights since childhood, and he always squatted, deadlifted and benched heavy. The no bullshit approach also struck a chord with me, I wasn’t being sold anything, I didn’t need to buy a ton of useless supplements, I just needed to do one of 2 different workouts, three times a week.

Still, I didn’t want to use only the bar. I’d feel embarrassed in the gym if I was working out with just a barbell. I couldn’t see how it would help either. I decided to stick to what I knew best – dicking around with dumbbells and machines. I didn’t follow a training program, I just did whatever I felt like in the gym. I’d chop and change the routine I was doing dependent on the last issue of Men’s Health. I didn’t know what I was going to lift in the gym before I got there – I’d just lift whatever I felt like. I didn’t bother to log what I’d lifted, which meant I’d never know whether I’d progressed or not.

In February 2009 I was watching rugby in a pub with a mate, and it was 6 months before he turned 29. We had a bet where we decided to put on a stone in body mass (not allowed to be fat) in 6 months. I’d been lurking on Stronglifts.com anyway, and decided that I had nothing to lose. I started drinking half a gallon of milk a day and followed StrongLifts 5x5 exactly as it was laid out.

Neil's Gains	Feb 2009	Dec 2010	Gains so far..
Age	29y	31y	
Body-weight (6'1")	187lb	185lb	-2lb
Body Fat	27%	14%	-13%
Deadlift	40kg	180kg	+140kg
Squat	20kg	127,5kg	+107,5kg
Bench Press	20kg	97,5kg	+77,5kg

I am in the best shape of my life, which is something I keep saying because my shape keeps getting better. I used to suck in my gut when I was out with friends, now I get comments from girls asking whether I’ve lost weight. My belt buckle is back down to the tightest notch – it’s as tight as it was ten years ago.

I’ve also got dramatically improved posture – sitting down all day for work when you talk on

the phone can lead to slouched shoulders, and I had terrible pains in my back from the way I'd sit at work. Now I walk tall, and within about 6 weeks of starting the pain in my back had gone. I walk with a much better posture, which makes me look more confident and projects that into my meetings at work.

In the first few months at my gym, most of the people would make comments about what I was doing. One guy told me I was squatting too low. Another told me to do sets of 10 because "they are better for cardiovascular conditioning". The personal trainers would come to tell me I was going to ruin my knees, because they only ever saw me squatting.

Now I get guys come and ask me to review their form. They want to know what program I'm using, and are interested in what I'm going to lift that day. The PT's give me a wide berth, because they know I'm not going to follow their bosu-ball routine, and that I don't listen to them anyway.

In the early days, my first posts inside the StrongLifts Community were very naive. Members gave me encouragement and advice to help allay my fears about starting SL5x5. When I signed in and started a training log I got almost instant responses – SL Members giving advice, sharing their thoughts and providing encouragement when the training got hard, or some other aspect of life got in the way. When I decided to lose fat I posted a few questions and was immediately given sound advice – from a resource I trusted. The more you listen to the advice and see yourself progress, the more you return to the site to learn even more.

I don't know why I started the training log inside the StrongLifts Community, I guess I wanted somewhere other than a notepad to write down my workouts. But it's morphed into something much more important. I get encouragement, advice, humour, and much more besides from the guys following my log. I know I've promised them many things, and I feel as though I have to hold myself accountable to them. It is important to keep a training log, as it's a complete record of your achievements, enables you to see how far you've come and keeps you honest.

I am a moderator inside the StrongLifts Community, and I don't want anyone thinking I've written this because I was paid to do so. The fact is, I'm a moderator here and I work for free. I do this because I got so much from this program, and because I want to ensure the community here remains as positive, helpful and free from BS as it was when I first joined.

Working with Mehdi is good, because we get to help shape the direction of the site. He's incredibly ambitious for where he wants this place to go, and it's only going to get bigger. He can be arrogant at times, but this is all backed up by results. I have no problem with people talking the talk as long as they walk the walk too.

You have nothing to lose by trying StrongLifts 5x5. Put down your ego and try lifting. This is amazingly powerful, and gives ridiculously good results for three short sessions a week.

-SL Member Neil aka "nburge", 31, London UK.

“How ironic that after just 3 weeks on SL5x5 I was getting the hard muscle look I’d been after for 13 years!”

My name is Don and I live in the Southeastern United States. I’m 31 years old and work in Information Technology. I’m about 6’1” 240lbs.

I started lifting weights in high school — probably around 16 years old. I wanted to get bigger and stronger for wrestling and football. I was a pretty skinny kid and have always had a bit of a complex about being too small.

I got almost all my workouts from magazines or just came up with them on my own. I would lift 4-6 days/week for 1.5-2 hours usually. I had tried just every workout you can find in popular magazines but nothing worked once I got to a certain point. My best bench from about 10 years ago, before Stronglifts, was 350lbs. It was a full ROM touch-and-go press. The routine I was doing at this time was out of Muscle and Fitness and was actually a power lifting routine.

The routines I used for years bored me for two reasons. 1) I wasn’t getting results anymore so that frustrated me. 2) I was constantly sore and the 2-3 days after a leg workout were just brutal. I would hit my legs so hard that I could barely walk for days afterwards. It’s hard to live a normal life when you’re limping around all the time and even harder to see the point in it when I wasn’t getting any stronger or bigger.

A guy at work told me about SL5x5 and the amazing progress he’d made with the program over the course of 4 months. So I thought I’d give it a try as I was getting bored with the normal bodybuilding routines I’d been doing for the past 13 years. I’m a rugby player but vanity always kept me doing sets of 8-12 instead of training for strength and power.

I had previously done volume training and had great success with that. StrongLifts 5x5 looked similar only with heavier weights. I’ve always been open to trying new routines, just had never really gotten hooked on a pure strength/powerlifting program before SL5x5.

I could have started heavier on pretty much all the lifts but I’m glad I picked the weights I did (followed StrongLifts 5x5 to the “t”). My form improved drastically — this is important to me because I’ve injured myself in the past when Squatting and Deadlifting heavy.

Don's Gains	June 2009	Sep 2009	Nov 2010	Gains so far...
Age	30y	30y	31y	
Body-weight (6'1")	210lb	225lb	235lb	+25lb
Body fat	10.5%	12%	11.5%	
Deadlift	185lb	365lb	550lb	+365lb
Squat	185lb	335lb	490lb	+305lb
Bench Press	185lb	280lb	380lb	+195lb
Press	85lb	175lb	230lb	+145lb

How ironic that after just 3 weeks on StrongLifts 5x5 I was getting the “hard muscle” look I’d been after for 13 years! (I don’t know how to explain this — basically, just that look

where you can tell a dude is strong. His clothes fit different over his body. There are big guys and then there are big, strong guys. I feel like I'm getting the look of the latter.)

I've gained approximately 25 lbs. I got serious about gaining weight and tried to follow the StrongLifts Diet as best I can (I'm a sucker for carbs so I've had several cheats). I have also cut fat a couple of times during the past year or I'd be closer to 250 right now.

Training 4-6 times/week for 1.5-2+ hours will never be in my program again. I have a 3 year old son and work too much for this to be feasible. Besides, I'm stronger and bigger now than I've ever been in my life and I've been going to the gym 3 times/week for no more than 1.5 hours for the past year.

I've pretty much done the same core group of exercises for one year and still look forward to going. For whatever reason I haven't gotten bored with these routines yet. The other day a pencil-legged guy commented that if he did squats as much as I do he'd hate coming to the gym. I guess that's why he has skinny legs. I love to squat and love to deadlift now. Chasing strength gains has become an obsession and I'm constantly in competition with my previous workout. Setting tangible goals is something I've been working on in my life in general and this has just carried over to the gym. The South Carolina raw record total at 242 lbs is 1400 lbs – I plan to break this within the next year.

I decided to retire from playing rugby as of a few weeks ago; however, when I was still playing I noticed that the extra strength helped out tremendously. Having the extra strength to break that last tackle, blow over a ruck, or tackle that heavier player on the opposing team was very handy. I think strength training is highly under-rated in the rugby community.

The Squat and Deadlift have tremendous carry over to rugby so if you're a rugby player who want to perform at a high level, there is no doubt you need to squat big and deadlift big. Training heavy with this kind of volume is not necessarily conducive to rugby, but it is easily adaptable. In-season you back off to 2 days/week and off-season you go 3-4 days. I've made this suggestion to at least 2 other SL members in my training log.

I think StrongLifts is the best place to start for anyone that hasn't done this type of training before. Even if you add 10 lbs/week for upper body and 20 lbs/week for lower body exercises, this phase of your training allows you to perfect your form and settle in to this new philosophy. I don't see any reason for anyone to stop SL 5×5 before reaching 1.5 x body weight squats and at least close to a bodyweight bench press. After SL 5×5, Madcow Intermediate is the perfect routine to follow up with. I made good gains with Madcow after SL 5×5. After Madcow, I would recommend SL Advanced. I think there are still solid gains to be made on this program and even after a year's worth of training and a power lifting total of 1300+ I'm still on SL Advanced. I plan to move on to something a little more adaptable after this cycle (such as 5/3/1), however.

Keeping a training log in the StrongLifts Community is the best thing I've ever done for myself. The accountability you feel helps get you in the gym on those days you don't want to go, the silent competition with other SL members helps you push that extra rep out, and the experiences of others is invaluable in preventing yourself from making those same mistakes. There are several members who have inspired me in their own logs and in my log and it's probably not fair to only mention a few, but SL Members Atypical, MikeD,

Holvoetn, JimSlade, and Jakemcmillan have provided fantastic insight, links, and have just been generally great support over the past year.

I haven't had to say much to the people I've suggested SL5x5 to. Usually the conversation goes something like this: <them> "I want to get bigger and stronger, what should I do?" <me> "Go to stronglifts.com, read the book, and then let me know if you have any questions." I've had this conversation 6 times over the past year. 5 people took the advice and are still doing Strong Lifts. The other decided to do HIIT workouts so obviously didn't want to get stronger or bigger.

Thanks for all the info on the site, it's been really helpful in diffusing the myths I'd believed in for so many years. I've been raving about StrongLifts 5x5 to several teammates and co-workers and even have started my wife on it!

-SL Member Don aka "Strong4rugby", 31, SC, USA.

“ I have gone from having difficulty climbing stairs to a pain-free Squat of 115kg; I also gained 25 kilos, going from 75kg to 100kg in about a year.”

A little about me: 30 years old. 189cm tall, 100kg. I'm from New Zealand, but I'm currently living in Asia, where I work as an English teacher. When I first found StrongLifts 5x5, I was 75kg, and could barely do a push up, let alone a pull-up.

I'd always been tall and skinny, but had started to develop a little pot belly. Until SL5x5, I had led a sedentary life, and have only my bird-like appetite to thank for my not being fat. I played sports when I was young, but a serious knee injury at age 11 put an end to that.

During P.E. class, I ran into a pole on the school tennis courts. My left knee took the full impact and fractured into 3 pieces. I underwent surgery and was left with a wire holding my knee together. I was left with reduced knee mobility, thigh atrophy and a lot of pain.

Physiotherapy was boring, inefficient and painful. I soon stopped the home exercises and therapy, and my sedentary life style began. My knee healed well enough to walk and run, but before long I'd be in pain. I started to favor my right knee to “protect” my left knee, which I thought of as weak and fragile. In my early twenties I suffered multiple subluxations of both knees. These injuries led to a diagnosis of trochlear dysplasia and arthritis.

So there I was at age 22. Arthritis, unstable kneecaps, constant aches and pains. I started to joke about shopping for a mobility scooter, but I was only half joking.

By age 28 I was sick and tired of being skinny and weak. I knew I had to make a change before my body fat got out of control. I was also sure that I could do something to help my knees. I signed up at a gym, but I was too intimidated to use the weight room. So I just used the machines in the circuit training room.

Then I found SL5x5, and started reading. Free weights, basic movements, strength over aesthetics. It made sense to me, but I was skeptical about squats. After all, the squat is performed by the knees, right? Surely it was a bad idea to use my beat-up knees as a hinge for a heavy exercise?

StrongLifts corrected my flawed understanding of the squat. I learned of the benefits of free weight squats, the role of the hips and hamstrings in the squat, and the importance of sitting back. I tried some with just my bodyweight, using that technique, and it felt good, with no pain or discomfort. I was encouraged and decided to start on StrongLifts 5x5.

I did bodyweight squats for a few weeks, along with my first ever deadlifts, presses, and rows. Then I started squatting with the bar, and it was hard. My balance was terrible, the rack position hurt my wrists and shoulders, and I was worried about my back and my knees. But after just a few sessions I was getting the hang of it. I made sure to warm up well with hip mobility exercises, and things gradually got better, and I started adding the little plates to the bar.

I was using a cheap neoprene knee support. One day I forgot it, but when I squatted I could barely tell the difference. My knee felt stronger and I could see a new muscularity

working as I moved. The muscles around my knees had blown up and now held my patella much more securely. I felt more confident about my knees, and the aches and pains were greatly diminished.

However, I soon saw a major problem that needed addressing. My right thigh was stronger and 8cm bigger than my left thigh. It was bearing more of the load in the Squat, which I knew would only make the problem worse. I deloaded and paid extra attention to symmetry in the squat movement, and supplemented with unilateral exercises like lunges and step-ups.

These efforts showed results. Compare the left photo from February 2008 with the right one from May 2008. My injured left knee is on the right in the photos (you can see the scar from my surgery). My left knee muscles are bigger and stronger. I can no longer move my patella around in its socket. The size difference between the legs has reduced from 8 to 4cm.



My knee pain has reduced. My aches and pains are now just ordinary post workout soreness. A large part of the improvement was psychological. My left knee no longer feels weak, and I don't protect it from daily loading or balancing anymore. Over the years, various doctors and physiotherapists had prescribed machine-based exercises, such as leg extensions and leg presses, but all they ever did was cause me a lot of pain. It wasn't until I started squatting that I saw any improvement in my knee health.

My squats progressed slowly over the next year, as I added weight conservatively, and addressed a postural problem that was causing shoulder pain. I sometimes envy the guys who have taken their squat to 1.5x bodyweight and beyond, quickly and smoothly, but keeping my knees and shoulders happy was far more important to me than chasing numbers.

I have gone from having difficulty climbing stairs to a pain-free squat PR of 115kg, 3x5. I can do push-ups and pull-ups (not very many, but more than I could two years ago). I have learned good form on the basic exercises, and learned a lot about my training needs. I have radically changed my nutritional habits. I now fill out my size large t-shirts, instead of drowning in them. I have also gone from being too scared to step foot in a weight room, to moderating a rapidly growing community of lifters.

I also gained 25 kilos, going from 75kg to 100kg in about a year. The biggest challenge for me was increasing my calorie intake. It wasn't until I significantly increased my calorie intake from around 2000 to 3500-4000 that I started seeing any difference in my size and weight. I learned how easy it is to under-estimate how much you eat and lie to yourself about your habits.

I have no idea what my body fat percentage is, and I don't care. I would guess that it's in the high teens or low twenties. I have a pot belly and love handles, and at this moment I DO NOT GIVE A SH*T. "Having visible abs" has never appeared on my list of goals, and I'm a long way from being concerned about getting fat. Contrary to what some skinny boys seem to think, "not having visible abs" is not necessarily synonymous with "fat" or overweight. I'm sorry, but I think that kind of attitude is silly emo bullshit.

I'd had 100kg as my goal for a while. My squat and other lifts could be higher. The reason is that I've had periods where I've prioritized other things, such as my studies. I make no apologies about that, because I have only ever lifted weights on my own terms, according to my own needs, and in pursuit of my own goals. Lifting is not my life, but it has become an integral part of it, and I can say with confidence that lifting has improved my quality of life immeasurably.

-StrongLifts Member Michael aka "mjh", 30, NZ

“I’m glad I found Stronglifts 5x5. It’s driven home the importance of strict technique.”



My name's Simon, I'm from North London, UK and I'm an administrator for a Multiple Sclerosis charity. I'm 31 years old, 6'3" and currently weigh 292lbs. I was always a big strong athletic kid, at the age of 16 I was a slim 238lbs.

I first started lifting at the age of 19. I didn't have any clear goals or direction. I was 270lbs and wanted to drop a little excess fat and build muscle. I didn't follow any particular program and my sessions were dominated by machines. A few years later a work colleague who was a bodybuilder commented on my frame size and encouraged me to use free weights and improve my diet. I listened to his advice, but only half of it.

My diet was high in protein but I still ate lots of junk food and only worked the mirror muscles at the gym. I did not squat and rarely deadlifted. The few deadlifts I performed was with poor technique. My routine went as follows:

- Monday: Bench Press, Bench Flys, Incline Press, Dumbbell Curls, Concentration Curls, Negative Curls, Hammer Curls, Reverse Curls, Wrist Curls
- Wednesday: Chin ups, Barbell Row, Cable Row, Reverse Fly, Occasional Deadlifts
- Friday: Standing Behind the Neck Press, Standing Overhead Press, Shrugs, Skullcrushers, Cable Tricep Extensions, Rope Tricep Extensions

My rep range generally went as follows: 1x8, 1x6, 1x4 and 1x2 for each exercise. Why you ask? Well to be honest, I couldn't tell you then and I can't tell you now. I didn't really have a clue what I was doing. My genetics clouded my vision for training properly. Being young and inexperienced, it was easy for to me feel that my training was perfect and it didn't need changing. After all, I had 19" guns, ski slope traps and was king of the bench press at the health club. Problem is, despite my size I did not feel strong outside of the gym, I played other sports and didn't feel like my gym strength had much carry over. Poor form and a poor program lead to many shoulder strains and injuries. Eventually, injuries, a lack of motivation and life in general lead to missed training sessions and stopping altogether.

After 3 years without lifting weights I wanted a new challenge, something I always wanted to do. I took up amateur boxing. I boxed for 3 years learning the sweet science. The training was hard, intense and was a true test of character. I was training 6 times a week,

sparring, road running and performing HIIT. Unfortunately I could no longer dedicate enough time to boxing when I started a new job and relocated to another part of London. Boxing, even at amateur level requires full time dedication, as they always say “You don’t ‘play’ boxing”. During my short time as a boxer I didn’t use any weights, it was all press ups, bodyweight squats, burpees, star jumps, ab work, chins and dips.

I wanted to keep active after boxing and felt it was time to rejoin a gym. It was now 6 years since I’d touched a barbell. Being older and wiser I started to search for information online regarding effective training programmes. This is when I came across Stronglifts. I was skeptical at first, I didn’t think it made sense to squat 3 times a week. I also didn’t understand how you could be at times benching, rowing and pressing twice in a week. Then I thought, Bicep curls, where are they? After browsing the forum and reading the training logs of StrongLifts Members who were a similar size to me, I decided to start Stronglifts in June 2009.

Simon's Gains	June 2009	June 2009	Nov 2010	Gains so far
Age	30y	31y	31y	
Body-weight (6'3")	265lb	278lb	292lb	+27lb
Deadlift	65kg	205kg	260kg	+195kg
Squat	60kg	227,5kg	227,5kg(*)	+167,5kg
Bench Press	60kg	125kg	152,5kg	+92,5kg
Press	30kg	80kg	105kg	+75kg
Rows	30kg	95kg	150kg	+120kg

() My Squats have taken a slight backseat while I concentrate on deadlifting.*

My focus on Stronglifts 5x5 was to just get stronger. My goal was not physique based, but I am happy with the physique that strength training has given me. I look and feel strong and powerful. As you can see from my stats I’m bigger and heavier than when I first started. I’d like to point out that this is purely down to diet. I consumed a lot of calories to get me through the intense workouts. I don’t have a problem with putting on a little round the waist if it means I’m hitting my strength goals.

At 292lbs I’m more explosive and quicker than when I was 264lbs. I don’t play any other sports at present, but the changes are apparent when sprinting for a bus, lifting awkward heavy objects around the house or carrying heavy shopping. I have an all round muscular build and I feel there’s more of a balance or harmony between my lower and upper body, therefore making me feel stronger. This can only be attributed to Squats and Deadlifts working the body as a unit.

There are many archaic opinions regarding weight lifting and boxing. Many of these come from respected coaches and experienced fighters who’s opinions carry serious weight in the boxing community. So it’s no wonder why so many involved in boxing will say “no weights”, “weights will make you bulky”, “weights will slow you down”.

Ideally, someone new to boxing needs to put skills and ring craft as their main priority closely followed by conditioning. In my opinion conditioning should involve strength training. Squatting, Deadlifting plus the addition of cleans are essential for any sport that

requires strength and explosiveness. Strength training is not bodybuilding, you will put on some muscle but you will not bulk up to a point where you lose agility and athleticism.

Four months into Stronglifts I had an accident and broke my right hand. This was a severe blow to my training. I went 6 weeks without training and 14 weeks without Deadlifting. At the time of injury my stats were: Squat 170kg, Bench 117.5kg, Deadlift 190kg 1x5. Despite the long break, my training had given me a strong foundation and I was able to Squat 150kg on my first night back in the gym. Within 6 weeks I hit a PR of 182.5kg for a single. In my opinion I feel you hold on to your gains for longer with 5x5 and 3x5 strength training.

I've kept a log on Stronglifts.com since I started in June 2009. In my opinion it's essential to log your progress. I advise all Members new or old to keep a log as it acts as a great motivational tool. The log has also allowed me track back and see where I went wrong and what I can do to avoid making the same mistakes. The Members of the SL Community have been motivational, inspiring and very helpful. Many of the Members have pointed me in the right direction with technique and training advice.

My advice to anyone reading this is to try Stronglifts 5x5. Follow the program as laid out, be consistent, eat well and sleep well. You WILL get stronger! If you don't, then you're doing something wrong! The beauty of Stronglifts 5x5 is its simplicity. The program is basic and easy to follow. It motivates you because each time you train you're trying to lift more weight than the previous session. Do not underestimate the importance of setting PR's every workout. You'll wish you could train like this forever. Those who've advanced will tell you how much they miss being able to hit a new PR every time they train.

Some who are skeptical may tell you that there are other programs that will add more muscle in a quicker time. Stronglifts 5x5 is about building a solid foundation for your future goals be it strength or physique. Don't believe me? try it for yourself. I am not writing this to sell the latest bogus fitness fad. I'm writing this because I want you to have the same success that I've experienced with good old fashioned basic 5x5 barbell training!

My progress has been rapid especially on squats. This may be genetic, but the most important factor is consistency. Without consistency your training will come to nothing. Elite lifters have great genetic potential, but that's all it is, just potential! It's their determination, drive and consistency which have allowed them to reach such high levels strength and power.

I'm glad I found Stronglifts. I am stronger and more powerful. It's driven home the importance of strict technique. In an age where everyone wants to get ripped "yesterday", it's refreshing to carry out a program that encourages patience in order to reach your goals. Eat well, train hard, get your rest, be patient and consistent and you WILL succeed on Stronglifts 5x5!

I'll end this with a the biggest compliment I've received since starting on Stronglifts 5x5...
"Amazing work mate. You are a good example of a man who has a plan, sticks to it and is consistent - and the hard work pays off! Hats off, there are many who could learn alot from your experience over the last 12 months or so" Martin Brown, BPC/WPC Powerlifter (1000kg total and British Champion @ 102.8kg bodyweight)

-SL Member Simon aka "LittleSimonGeorge", 31, London UK.

“Setting a new PR during a workout has become one of the most satisfying elements of my life lately.”



My name is Buck and I'm 33 years old. I'm a Social Worker in Rotterdam, Netherlands. I started doing athletics when I was 7 years and used to sprint. At the age of 18, I was introduced to strength training. A former Olympic bobsledder trained me and a friend to do Squats and Power Cleans. I found it a nice variation for the workouts on the track.

When I was 20 I quit athletics due to my study, work and internship. I had not the energy and motivation to do sports in the evening. Strength training faded away with my decision to quit athletics. But I kept going to work on my bicycle and ate healthy.

Two years after I quit athletics, I decided to enter the gym at age 22. I had to have some form of physical activity in my life whatsoever. The variable training times of lifting weights fitted my life more than the fixed workouts of other sports. I had no knowledge about training back then so I just did what the gym staff told me to do: bodybuilding schemes.

For four years I trained with the usual 3 to 4 days a week split-schemes, with 8-12 reps. Funny thing was I became more pumped than strong! Also funny was that I had the best progression with schemes that involved a lot of, what I now know is called, compound exercises. Honestly I didn't know what compound exercises were at that time, I saw them as isolation exercises. When I later read about full body exercises on the Stronglifts website I learned that compound exercises are full body exercises.

Unlike most gym-visitors the Squat was my favorite exercise. It was motivating to see that as a skinny guy I out-squatted the big fellows. I always liked the Squat over the leg extensions. It's more fun to do exercises where you move more than 100 kg. It's up to mental focus, technique and brutal effort. Can you say the same for lateral raises?

After a couple of years I lost interest in training because of an intense job as a social worker. I had once again no energy to go to the gym in the evening. In September 2009 I moved to another city and because of the distance between my home and work I couldn't cycle anymore. It was too far. By excluding the cycling from my life, there was no physical activity left. I needed to workout, one way or the other. That's why I decided to train in the gym again. I love the gym, not only for the type of sport, but also because of the flexibility

in training times. I'm a busy man: full-time job, relationship, household, social life. Fixed workout times just don't do it for me. The chances are that I skip workouts that way.

I re-entered a gym and started with a bodybuilding scheme from some dutch website. A two hours workout, two times a week. I found it to be exhausting! After more than 60 minutes of training I usually lost my concentration, eager and energy.

That's why I searched the internet for different ways of training. I googled strength training programs because I preferred compound exercises above isolation. And so I came along Stronglifts. I had never seen such a complete website before. All comes together in Mehdi's book; logic, my experience, simplicity, and all the info you need. Chapeau Mehdi!

Honestly I was skeptical about gaining muscle by 'just' 3 workouts a week of one hour and not training for the burn or pump. It was hard to let go off the myths I've gathered through my years of training in the gym. But the one thing I learned in life is to hold on to something. You just can't say this program isn't going to work after a couple of weeks. You have to believe it can work. If you remain skeptic the self-fulfilling prophecy will kill the program. That's what I've done wrong in the past. I've switched almost more programs than underpants. How are you going to measure and compare results if you don't give a training program a chance? Becoming older and wiser certainly helped me with this.

I started Stronglifts January 4th 2010. I Switched to 3x5 May 25th 2010. Since June 21st 2010 I'm on StrongLifts Intermediate.

Buck's Gains	Jan 2010	Apr 2010	Nov 2010	Gains so far
Age	33y	33y	33y	
Body-weight (5'9")	70,5kg	77,5kg	78,5kg	+8kg
Deadlift	100kg	128kg	164kg	+64kg
Squat	75kg	118kg	140kgx7	+65kg
Bench Press	50kg	70kg	84kg	+34kg

I've gained 7kg (16lbs) of raw muscle within 3 months of StrongLifts 5x5! The lazy, the disbelievers or the cynical ones among you may now surf to another website. But if you do, make sure you surf to a website where you can order steroids, because I can't think of another way to gain 7kg of muscles within 3 months naturally. You're still reading. Great! I'm pleased and presume you're keen on building a muscular body in a healthy and honest manner yourself.

Stronglifts makes me feel good. And not only because of the gained kilo's of muscle and the improved mirror reflection, but Stronglifts makes me feel like a man. A beast would be an even better statement. Lifting weights of more than 100kg makes you growl like a grizzly. If you're a introvert person like me, it's a funny experience. Before I started SL5x5 I was mostly keen on building a muscular body, but after three months of Stronglifts my main goal is to become stronger and set new PR's as often as possible. The muscle will come along and has not my specific attention anymore. Setting a new PR during a workout has become one of the most satisfying elements of my life lately. An example: recently I set a new bench PR, 70kg (5x5). A week earlier I wanted to beat the 70kg so badly. I was thinking about it a couple of times a day and saw myself bench that weight in my thoughts.

During the workout it was a real effort and very close. With the last bit of energy left in my body I killed that bench beast! The celebrating grunt afterwards was as loud and clear as a warrior's would be. I'm sure I couldn't have made it without the mental preparation.

Stronglifts is all about focus, about mental preparation, and about setting goals. There's no better confidence builder! I'm already more focused on projects at my work, I have more confidence in myself to give my best at projects. And I'm sure I'll benefit from the skills I'm developing by strength training in other aspects of my life like relationships.

Stronglifts is simple. I can't think of another training program that's so simple. Bodybuilding programs often have more than ten isolation exercises per workout, with all sorts of mind dazzling shocking principles, pyramid training, six-trainingdays-a-week-split-schemes, and so on. Stronglifts only has 3 basic exercises per workout which you do for 5 sets of 5 reps with same weight. Can it be any easier? I don't think so.

But, don't let me fool you by my statement. It's the mental aspect of this program which is challenging and I like that a lot. Progressive weight training demands mental focus. The compound exercises of Stronglifts are HEAVY! Concentration is therefore everything, because you have to put extra weight on the barbell every workout. In addition, there's plenty of material on the Stronglifts website about form, motivation, mobility work and diets which you can study. And learning new stuff is fun for the brain and keeps you sharp.

A more subtle feeling is produced by being one of the few man in my gym who are training functional strength with full-body workouts. I'm getting my pride out of it. There lies comfort in the thought that I've got a preconceived plan. This plan has kept me on the tracks when some eyebrows in the gym were lifted when I wrote down notes in my training journal, or when I was doing some mobility work, or when I stopped at 5 reps and my spotter yelled at me I could and should have done at least one more. Beside the minor 'negative' reactions, I'm getting respect from the other guys in the gym. Out-squatting the the Captains of Upper-Body or being asked to train together on the squats are examples of being noticed. Not that my goal is to get in the spotlights, but I use this positive feedback to motivate myself even more.

The Stronglifts community is fantastic. Every question you have regarding the program has already been asked by SL Members. That's a very cool aspect of Stronglifts, it has a respectable community which is willing to help each other out. Especially nice was getting to know two guys whom are living nearby: StrongLifts Members Luco and Pangram. In my gym there's no one on a full body program. It's fun to train together and sharing enthusiasm regarding Stronglifts. I'd like to thank SL Members Luco and Pangram for daring to train together with me. Luco has been a good mentor. He gave me plenty of advice regarding my form.

I'd also like to thank my girlfriend for her support. She's the one who's bringing all the eggs and gallons of milk to our house without complaining. I may have lift thousands of pounds of iron, but I'm sure she have out-lifted me with the groceries. Thanks dear.

Starting a training log is one of best ways to keep track of your progression. You can't remember the details of every workout. It's just too much (but vital) information. A log motivates: you can see which achievements you made in a short time (follow Stronglifts and you amaze yourself). It will also keep you on track when you feel lethargic or during a

motivation crisis, because you have a plan. With a plan you're so much further than most guys at the gym who are just training by feeling. And it's fun to get motivating or instructive replies from other members. I'd like to thank all the StrongLifts Members for their motivating comments in my training log, especially Holvoetn, Maroon, Tyrone and Guru for their support.

Follow StrongLifts 5x5 for at least 3 months with total dedication. Never miss a workout and do everything as prescribed. Don't worry about guys at the gym who tell you you're working out the wrong way. Don't let you be fooled by the 'pump myth'. Don't get stressed because you think your upper chest muscle is growing faster than the lower. Don't let anything distract you from following Stronglifts. Just workout as planned and measure your results after 3 months. You'll be a grizzly before you know it.

I may sound like a paid Mehdi disciple because I'm lyric about his training program, but that's the price you have to pay when you become a grizzly bear after 3 months of SL5x5. I consider myself a walking Stronglifts advertisement.

-SL Member Buck aka "Quiver", 33, The Netherlands.

“I have found the most important part of training is setting goals and giving things a chance to work. ”



My name is Jason Hansen and I'm from Oshawa Canada. I work as a Communication lineman, as such I do a lot of pole climbing, pushing stuff and pulling other stuff. When I started lifting my lifestyle was mostly sedentary. I watched a lot of TV, ate often, and didn't do much of anything. I was around 220 lbs at about 34% BF. The fact that my job is fairly physical is the reason I wasn't fatter when I started StrongLifts 5x5.

I decided to start lifting soon after we had our second daughter. With the obesity epidemic in North America I wanted my kids to be the exception not the norm. With this in mind I decided to start going to the gym so the kids would have a positive role model. The first few months at the gym were just a mess of curls and machines. I lost a little weight since I was doing a tonne of cardio but I wasn't enjoying myself. Looking back I really feel that my time in the gym before StrongLifts 5x5 was wasted.

I was speaking with a friend about his training programme and he told me about SL5x5, he was experiencing great results so I thought I would give it a try. That being said I added a lot of "stuff" in the beginning. As time went on I started to find that I wasn't getting results from the other stuff and I didn't have the energy to waste time on them anymore. Once I started doing the programme by the book the stalls stopped and I really started to feel satisfied with my training sessions.

The changes to my physique were quite astonishing. My weight moved around very little but I went from 34% bf measured with calipers to 21.5. People notice I'm slimmer around the waist than I once was. My shoulders and back receive compliments from my wife.

I feel a lot healthier now than before. My heart no longer flutters when I get stressed. My relationship with my wife is better as I don't get stressed as much. My self confidence has increased, I no longer feel the need to cross my arms over my gut while sitting. My lifts have gone up dramatically, at the gym I do get looks and comments. When I put the fourth plate on each side and squat to full depth I turn heads. I can't wait until the fifth.

I started with just the bar for everything except Bench where I had to use dumbbells due to

the poorly equipped gym I was going to. Have you ever seen a gym with a squat rack but no bench? Crazy! Anyhow I changed gyms and here are my numbers.

Jay's Gains	June 2009	Dec 2010	Gains so far...
Age	33	35	
Body-weight (5'10")	220lb	220lb	
Body fat	34%	21,5%	-12,5%
Waist	41"	37,5"	-3,5"
Biceps	11,5"	15,5"	+4"
Deadlift	95lb	455lb	+360lb
Squat	45lb	415lb	+370lb
Bench Press	30lb (dbs)	250lb	
Press	45lb	160lb	+115lb

I have found the most important part of training is setting goals and giving things a chance to work. A unspecific goal like get fit will never be achieved because there is no way to quantify "fit" whereas squat 400 pounds is very finite and progress can be gaged easily. When the goal is finally met you can feel satisfied for a few minutes while you make your next goal. My goals for 2011 are Dead 500, Squat 450, Bench 300 and Press 200.

The StrongLifts community has helped me reach my goals. Having a group of like minded people to bounce ideas and questions off has helped me through a lot of rough spots. The competition between Members found on the StrongLifts Strongest Man page keeps me looking ahead and setting new goals. My training log does keep me accountable, keeping it updated and not wanting to miss training sessions because people are watching helps. I find checking the logs of Members with similar lifts and programmes can give me ideas that may get me past a tough patch.

To those that don't think StrongLifts 5x5 would work for them I say why not try it anyhow. 6 months away from curling and machines isn't going to kill you. Give it an honest effort and if after 6 months if you aren't happy go back to what you were doing. I think that after 6 months most people would be looking towards the next programme in the StrongLifts Ladder of Strength progression rather than going back.

-SL Member Jason Hanson aka "jjay2000", 35, Oshawa Canada.

“Lifting heavy weights teaches you to look inside yourself and test what you have.”



Michael, 36yo, Brisbane Australia; Public Servant.

I was a pretty skinny teen weighing about 73kg (at 185cm) when I left school at 16yo to be a newspaper journalist. I did almost no exercise (apart from the odd indoor cricket/touch football teams which were more about how well you could drink not your playing ability). I have always eaten fairly healthily (I've never had a real sweet tooth and usually cooked for myself) but loved big portions and was a pretty big drinker.

I lived the good life after school, lots of drinking eating large meals, eating out for lunch almost every day. As my metabolism started to slow in my late 20s and early 30s my weight just kept heading north. As it was incremental it wasn't something I took a great deal of notice of although I certainly knew I wasn't in spectacular shape.

When I started to work in Government at 26yo, I found a great little Italian restaurant near work and my work colleagues and myself would gather there for lunch nearly every day. Large plates of pasta and a couple of wines at lunch, followed by large plate of food and a couple of beers for dinner. I lived right in the heart of an entertainment precinct and was unencumbered by kids and a mortgage so entertaining at my place meant a trip to one of the local cafes or pubs for long sessions.

After my (then 4yo) son told me I had "boobs" I joined a gym in June 2008 weighing in at an embarrassing 103.4kg. I reckon the PTs took a look at me and listened to my life story and thought "this guy ain't gonna last the journey and won't be paying for a PT so we'll give him the cookie cutter version and move on" - one gym goer who is a friend of a friend actually lost \$100 when I saw out my first month. When I first started at the gym, I put down losing 10kg as my goal. But 10kg was just a number, I had no idea how difficult it would be to achieve, what I would look like with 10kg off and was given very little assistance by the PT in actually defining a goal.

I got the traditional "PT program", alternating weights and cardio days. The weights were the chest press machine, the lat pulldown, and the Smith machine for bench pressing.

The cardio was 15 mins on the treadmill, 15 mins on the crosstrainer/stepper and 15 mins on the bike. After a month of that I was bored shitless and seeing very little change in either fitness level or weight loss. I really felt like I would enjoy weights training more than cardio (but still believed I had to do cardio to lose weight).

I went to my Uni library and took out "Strength Training Anatomy" and a programming book (can't recall the title). With those I cobbled together a program that consisted of seven exercises done three times a week with a rep scheme of 3x6 - a squat (or deadlift), a press, a bench press, pull up/row, tricep exercise, bicep exercise and an ab exercise. I didn't do these very scientifically - I didn't have great form and I didn't track any details.

For cardio I subbed in HIIT on the row machines or crossfit style met-con workouts. I also added in a 5km run every Sunday morning (rain, hail or shine) and followed that with about 5-8km of walking. And I started to count calories (not religiously, just a pretty fair idea) and dropped all sugar from my diet (i.e. no coffee, green tea/black tea with no added sugar). Just a general tidy up of my diet.

I consistently lost weight until I hit 79.4kg in May 2009. I had also gone from a size 42 pants to a size 34. By this stage I was doing a deal of cardio at a high intensity. I cut back a bit of my cardio work and increased my diet slightly as I thought I was too skinny. I held between 80kg-83kg from June '09 through until March '10 by lifting (without a program) and doing crossfit-style met-con work.

At the beginning of 2010 I was looking to improve my lifting both in quality and quantity. I was actually looking for somewhere to buy Starting Strength as it is often quoted on another forum I used to visit and came across Stronglifts. After reading Mehdi's book I was a convert. I could probably Squat 85kg and pulled 120kg for 3x6 but I ditched the ego and stripping right back on all my lifts to make sure I had a solid platform of technique to work with as I drove to new heights.

Michael's Gains	March 2010	July 2010	Gains so far
Age	36	36	
Body-weight (1m85)	83.5kg	88kg	+4,5kg
Waist	34"	32"	-2"
Deadlift	55kg	165kg	+110kg
Squat	37,5kg	138kg	+100,5kg
Bench Press	25kg	67kg	+42kg

Since the start of losing weight I now feel more confident. I actually inquired about getting a job working on television (it didn't work out). When I was overweight I wouldn't have had anywhere near enough confidence to even give it a thought.

People were always commenting on my 'weight loss' but now people comment on how much stronger I look. My arms and shoulders look much more defined and my quads now overhang my knee caps like a verandah. I can't recall ever going swimming with my son during my fat days as it meant taking my shirt off which was pretty embarrassing - now its a bloody cold day to make me put a shirt on lol!

But since starting Stronglifts 5x5 I feel stronger and with greater energy. I am eating much more food (I break it down into six meals) although I do eat very clean and high protein (lots of eggs, sardines, chicken wings) without putting on any fat. Both my sons are embracing the healthy lifestyle and my youngest son's (4yo) favourite party trick is to get down and rattled off a half dozen push ups. My oldest son is always checking his food (not that he won't eat a Cheese Burger but he knows its not proper food).

Lifting heavy weights teaches you to look inside yourself and test what you have. You learn about being able to focus solely on the task at hand. It also makes you very aware of your body. The SL Community often have senior members saying to new ones to remain on StrongLifts 5x5 for as long as possible as you aren't aware of what is missing and this is completely true. As you lift heavier you "hear" your body tell you about how it operates.

When I started to get more educated about the relationship between weight loss, fat loss, resistance training and cardio, I was a typical "have a laugh at the PTs" type of gym goer. But now I feel they more fall into two (and possibly across two) categories - 1. under-educated; and 2. doing things they think will "trick" their customers into coming back as often as they can to eke as much money out of them as possible. PT customers, in the main, probably get what they want/deserve.

The whole "machine" thing in the gym does sh*t me to tears and I am sure there is a PT version of You Tube where PTs from all over the globe upload footage them themselves getting customers to do really ridiculous sh*t, particularly on bosu balls and in Smith Machines. Given some of the stuff I've seen, the PTs must be laughing to tears about some of the stuff that people will do when they ask them.

To lose 'weight' it's mainly about diet but if you are wanting to look strong and healthy, then cardio is the third choice in your armory behind diet and resistance training (and a proper program). If you clean up your diet and decide you aren't about looking strong but you want to run a marathon, then more power to you, but the weight you lose will be as much muscle as it will be fat. You will be lighter but you won't necessarily look any better.

Machines are rubbish. They provide none of the intensity required to have any significant impact on your fat-loss and are unhelpful in building proper strength and thus muscle-size. Crossfit-style met-con work can give you good results for weight loss but does not build any strength nor any muscle. You really focus on endurance not pure strength.

As an example, so you could deadlift 135lbs ten but not be able to deadlift 300lbs times but after undertaking SL5x5 and getting your deadlift to 300lbs, you'll have no trouble doing 135lbs ten times. From my experience, the carry over from pure strength to endurance is greater than the other way around. I am undertaking a 10km run on three weeks notice despite it being twice as far as I've ever run before and not having done any running at all since January. The Stronglifts program provides a solid foundation for your GPP due to the set of volume and intensity.

The training log and SL Community are integral to the SL5x5 program. For the program to be successful, you need to 1. be dedicated and consistent, and 2. record what you are doing so that you can see your results. The training logs do that and you are aware that you have members who are reading them and following your progress to keep you accountable.

The quality of moderating is first class with a refreshing lack of pure "bro-science". The StrongLifts forums provide a healthy mix of knowledge from a researched perspective but also, importantly, from Members who have done, or are going through, the same process as you are. They have encountered the problems and have found work-arounds to road blocks.

If you are overweight and you are wishing to get healthy and look good, then the Stronglifts program and the associated dietary advice is just what you required. The SL program will enable you to target 'fat loss' rather than weight loss and provide you with the incentive of getting better at something session after session.

Doing cardio to lose fat, or worse wasting your valuable time and hard earned money on gym machines, and then moving on to building up muscle is an inefficient way to getting results. You can simultaneously lose fat, retain muscle and build strength by doing Stronglifts. Squatting three times a week along with the other 'big compound lifts' - press, bench press and deadlift - and the associated assistance exercises is all the exercise you need accompanied by a reformed diet to deliver fat loss and a better looking, stronger and healthier body. By the time you have done 12 weeks of the Stronglifts program, you will know enough about your body to be able to deliver the exact results you are looking for - whether that is more muscle, 'hawt abz', greater strength etc.

-SL Member Michael aka "Starofflorida", 36yo, Australia.

Success story posted on the StrongLifts Facebook Fan Page....

Do this program it is cool!

The other day I had a strange experience. It was a couple of days after the post about compliments. I work away (London) from home (Manchester) a lot and I stay in hotels anyway the hotel I was staying in had a good gym ie it had a squat rack! There were 3 big chaps around the squat rack doing partial squats (going down about 3") they were spotting each other with about 120kg of weight. After they had finished I was next on; now I'm not a big chap myself 5'6 80kg

I was squatting 5x5 120kg atg w/o a spotter and I swear it was as if the whole gym stopped and looked at me; the chaps who had been doing partials looked visibly embarrassed.

I started about 6 months ago on the program and it's the best thing I have ever done! I am 39 years old and have trained on and off since I was a teen but I have never done anything with the consistency I applied to this - I put this down to this program works and gets results and is simple!

Ahamar Rifat, 39, London UK.

“When you hear, “Dad, you’re really strong” that is what makes it all worthwhile.”



Simon, 36, 200lbs, 5'11". Forensic Computing Analyst from the UK.

Over the years I had lifted weights on and off. Generally this had involved machines and very often without any particular focus. Leg work was none existent and the nearest I got to free weights were the dumbbells at the gym. I decided to give up my gym membership and bought some free weights to use in my garage at home. I had been following a rough split type program and had read up on the 'squats and milk' program. Having spent some time on this, I was seeing results, but again I always seemed to lack a specific focus. I realized this was mainly due to not setting goals to work towards.

Carrying out some more research on the internet, I soon became more aware of the squat and deadlift and the benefits of both. While searching for articles on form, I came across Stronglifts. I joined the Community on 7 January 2008 and made my first post a week later after a good bit of reading. My first reply was from Mehdi – the site was still relatively new!

These were my initial goals: *“wanting to lose the fat and tone up – oh and get stronger. Hoping as an initial goal to get over 100kg in my squatting, 140 for deads with bench and press weights getting up to a respectable amount as well.”*

And I wrote: *“Love the site, it’s nice and simple without all the extra unnecessary bells and whistles other sites have – pretty much like the programme itself I guess – simple, effective and straight to the point!”*

Simon's Gains	Jan 2008	Nov 2010	Gains so far
Age	34y	36y	
Body-weight (5'11")	90kg	90kg	
Deadlift	60kg	200kg	+140kg
Squat	50kg	170kg	+120kg
Bench Press	35kg	100kg	+65kg

In reality though, it is anything but simple. It is not just about lifting the bar, but progressive loading, the correct food and good quality rest. It is also about consistency. There is so much information on the whole site and the way it is all put together appealed to me then as it continues to do so now. I progressed well with Stronglifts. I bought a power rack and eventually an olympic bar and weights. I started StrongLifts 5x5 on 7 Jan 08.

Life gets in the way sometimes and for one reason or another my lifting took a back seat. I lost a lot of weight – fat and muscle through this but Stronglifts was always there to return to and get me back up to speed. Having had a 4 month or so break, by July 2009 my deadlift was up to 182kg (400lbs).

Since then I had an unsuccessful run at 5/3/1 – again my personal life got in the way somewhat – but I missed squatting 3 times a week as well. I returned to lifting in the new year with StrongLifts 3x5 to get my numbers up again before focusing on my squat. My main goal remains a 227kg (500lb) deadlift and a 180kg (400lb) squat. Secondary goals are Bench 112.5kg (250lbs) and Press 90kg (200lbs), maybe more, we'll see.

The whole community at Stronglifts is what makes it work for me. Keeping a training log, commenting in other logs, threads and competitions keeps you motivated. I have what I would class as some good friends at Stronglifts. I've never met and probably am unlikely to meet most of them, but that's not the point.

Like most things, people always know best. Stronglifts 5x5 works. I can't put it any simpler than that. I'm from the chubby side of lifting, if you are too and you want this to work, my advice is: use the StrongLifts Diet and don't go mad on starchy carbs, follow Stronglifts 5x5 consistently, work hard with progressive loading and get a good 8 hours sleep each night. It can be challenging though and I'm far from good all the time.

Lack of sleep is my bugbear – but that's the perils of a 6 year old son! But when you hear, "Dad, you're really strong" that is what makes it all worthwhile. My son doesn't care for washboard abs and to be honest neither do I. I feel stronger than I did, I feel better inside and I feel within myself I look better. I'm not massive, I'm not cut, but I feel strong. That's really down to compound lifts and Stronglifts 5x5.

- SL Member Simon aka "Mouse", 37, UK.

“I'd never tried pushing myself as hard as SL 5x5 called for, but I wanted to see how far I could go with it.”



37yrs old, 6'0", 200lbs and I have no idea what my body fat is. I'm from Saskatchewan, Canada and I work at a satellite tracking station. It's mostly a desk job so I don't do a lot of physical activity outside of my weight training.

I got suckered into a 1yr membership at 24hr Fitness back in 1995 and was given a machine routine to follow. No advice on diet, progression, keeping a logbook, nada. I worked hard to get results but ultimately got skinny and weaker not bigger and stronger. I started my current job in the beginning of 1998 and I didn't do lifting of any kind until Dec.2004 when I decided that I was out of shape and this was not going to continue.

I printed out a bodybuilding.com workout log titled "Three day Workout for Mass." It called for 1 set of 13 different (half isolation/half compound) exercises but didn't give guidelines on form, progression, deloading and so on. Looking back, it was poorly thought out but it was better than what I was doing before, nothing. My printouts go to mid-Oct 2005.

I hurt both shoulders (rotator cuff injury - likely from using the pec deck and benching with improper form) and stopped lifting again until Jan.2009. I was very gunshy about re-injuring my shoulders. I, ignorantly, started using the same bodybuilding template but cut out the exercises that I felt caused the shoulder impingement. So, I was doing things like dumbbell squats, leg curls, leg extensions, calf raises, chinups and cable rows.

I slowly changed the routine and started crossing out the stupider isolation exercises and added 2 more sets to what I was doing, as well as changing the order of the exercises from workout to workout. By March 2009, I started following a 3-day full body routine off T-nation. 4 compound exercises (ex. bench, rows, press, squats and deadlifts), 2 single joint exercises (curls, tricep extensions, calf raises), exercise variation every few workouts and so on. So I felt it was a better program than the bb.com one I had been using.

I had been doing this routine for around a year and wasn't seeing gains. My numbers were plateaued and my love handles/belly were getting bigger which I found alarming. I was looking for barbell specific routines and StrongLifts.com came up. A reassessment of what I was eating by reading the articles here on nutrition and calorie counting for a couple of

weeks gave me a slap upside of my head. My diet as it turns out was too low in protein and too high in carbohydrates. I read and followed the StrongLifts Diet, drastically increased my protein intake, started eating more fruits and veggies as well as reducing my refined carbohydrate intake.

I was a little bit worried about hurting myself with StrongLifts 5x5 (right knee was badly twisted while skiing 5yrs previously and the aforementioned bad shoulders) but decided to give it a try anyway. I'd never tried pushing myself as hard as linear progression called for but wanted to see how far I could go with it. I bought a cheap 300lb Oly weight set, unjunkafied a room in my basement, set up a couple of saw horses and started lifting SL 5x5 on Feb.22/10.

Rolf's Gains	Feb.22/10	Jul.5/10	Gains so far...
Age	37y	37y	
Height	6'0"	6'0"	
Waist	37"	35,5"	-1,5"
Body-weight	197lbs	200lbs	+3lbs
Deadlift (*)	150lbs	320lbs	+170lbs
Squat (**)	120lbs	225lbs	+95lbs

I'm happy with the results. My older brother has commented off-handedly about my "big" arms. I just chuckle and shake my head. Strength-wise, my niece gets a kick out of me carrying her around like a sack of potatoes and easily pressing her overhead.

My shoulders are much better than they were when I hurt them. I think a combination of more overhead press work and broomstick stretches helped rehab them. I haven't been conscientious about mobility work on my knees but I don't have any major knee issues from doing the lifts so no worries there. I did get some tendonitis in my right hip flexors and a sore lower back from losing good form on my squats but it's healed. I've been more diligent with keeping my knees from going forward and keeping a tight back when coming up out of the hole.

People don't like to get out of their comfort zone so starting something like barbell training is daunting and dangerous to them. That is a pity because strength is so readily applicable to everyday life. Hell, opening a can of anything (no cheating with hot water under the tap j/k) effortlessly after someone else struggles with it. Placing a box on a high shelf in the closet, carrying grocery bags to/from the car, etc. There is a bit of self-image too. I won't deny it, I do check myself out sometimes in mirrors I walk past.

Lifting weights and eating healthy can improve one's quality of life and body composition better than boring cardio or a bodybuilding style of workout. Lift heavy using compound movements and do it consistently, eat lots of protein/veggies/fruit and try to get a decent night's sleep.

-SL Member Rolf aka "MovingTarget", 37, Saskatchewan Canada.

“If you can impose your will over a cold heavy lump of iron and it's accomplice gravity then you can overcome all sorts of problems.”



My first name is Richard but I prefer to use my middle name James or Jim. I'm a Yorkshireman and work in the UK Criminal Justice System, these days behind a desk.

I played the usual sports at school, cricket and then rugby, although I've never been bothered about football, too clumsy I suppose. I had a run in with a couple of lads late at night getting off a bus who randomly picked a fight with me. I wasn't doing very well defending myself when I was helped out by a local bodybuilder who ran across the road and saw off the two lads. I decided to start lifting weights so I'd stand a better chance in situations like that.

I started lifting at home in the basement of my parents house using an old weight set belonging to my father. By the time I was 17 in 1989 I began training three times a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday. I weighed 12 stone (168lbs) and wore 28 inch waist jeans which seems very skinny these days.

My first years of training were simple, I only had basic equipment, a barbell, bench and a pair of flimsy squat stands. I used simple linear progression on the Squat, Bench Press and Deadlift, following a routine very similar to SL5x5 adding a little weight each time until you stall. I had the usual success with linear progression (even though I didn't know to call it that then) that you can expect. By 19 years old I weighed 14 stone (196lbs) and was determined to deadlift 500lbs.

I started powerlifting and hit the "magic" numbers of 400lbs Squat, 300lbs Bench and 500lbs Deadlift, and then got stuck at those weights for a couple of years. Eventually I've made it to elite numbers in all the big lifts and some more obscure lifts. At one point I could press a pair of 150lb dumbbells for 3 reps and a pair of 100lb dumbbells for 20 reps.

At my biggest I weighed 255lbs and took a size 54 in suit jackets and had a 40 inch waist. I could Deadlift over 600lbs, Squat in the high 500lbs area, and Bench over 450lbs. Once in

a bench-only show I benched 315lbs for 15 reps.

The biggest mistake I ever made was when I started training at a bodybuilding gym and began lifting with a group of bodybuilders. Over a period of months they persuaded me to abandon my traditional training routine and start following a multiple bodypart split type routine. For about 3 years I completely stalled, my lifts stayed more or less static and my bodyweight stayed the same. Worse still I didn't even look like a bodybuilder.

My second mistake was to stop measuring my performance, I stopped keeping a training diary and began to focus on the body parts I was training. I actually began to care about the difference between an incline bench press and a dumbbell fly.

Then I moved gyms again and met an old powerlifter, a man in his 60s who was still benching 300lbs, and squatting and deadlifting 405lbs. This old guy was following a routine used by Reg Park, this routine was a full body workout three times a week, again compound lifts using 5x5 like StrongLifts 5x5. He told me to worry about my numbers and the body would follow. He asked me if I'd ever seen a man how could squat 405 who looked weak. It made perfect sense. I decided to quit the bodypart type training and just go back to powerlifting, this was perhaps in 2000.

I found StrongLifts.com one winter night in 2008 by googling "deadlift" and saw an article written by Mehdi about correct deadlift form. I'd been stalled on the deadlift for some time and found the article very interesting. It was one of the most straight forward pieces on the lift I'd seen, so I had a look around the site at the other information. The mission of SL was a real change from all the poorly written, badly researched and frankly misleading stuff I tended to see on the internet. This no BS approach was very welcome.

I've not tested my maxes for a while as I'm more concerned with staying injury free these days although I am still going for increased weights. I took several months recently to fix my bench after hurting my shoulder. After months of slowly tinkering with weights and form I just got back to benching that magic four plates last June 2010. I'm now aiming to push past 405lbs again. Current stats: 38y, 5'9", 16 stones (224lbs), 36 inch trousers.

One other goal I'm chasing is a seated press behind the neck with 315lbs. I've come close in 2010 but I think with some hard work I can get there. I failed with 600lbs on the Squat recently and injured a rib, which set me back a little, so I've been trying a new approach with Squats. My goal is still 600lbs but I'm more interested in getting more reps with a lighter weight than an all out max lift.

These days I can't imagine not being a weightlifter in some capacity. Anyone who knows me thinks of me as "strong" before they consider any other quality I might have, it's simply become who I am. My lifetime long battle with the iron has forged a kind of mental strength though that is as useful as the physical power. If you can impose your will over a cold heavy lump of iron and it's accomplice gravity then you can overcome all sorts of problems. All it takes to make me happy now is the love of a good woman, a belly full of beer and pies and a half ton of iron.

My wife has been training longer than me (about 23 years now) she was a natural bodybuilder for many years. She started training after being told she was too skinny for the first years of her life. Once she started training she was bitten by the bug and it became

one of the central interests of her life. These days she's doing olympic lifting after deciding to learn the clean and jerk in 2009 to replace her CV work. She just fell in love with the challenge.

I've enjoyed keeping a training log at StrongLifts as people seem to enjoy my ranting and also it's nice to have someone care what you've actually lifted and understand what that means. When I tell a non lifting friend I've benched 400lbs it doesn't really mean anything to them, they don't understand the effort involved (and aren't really interested anyway). Here there are people I may never meet and they actually want me to get that big lift, just like I want them to improve and get as strong as possible. I've been lifting for over 20 years and love all the strength sports I like SL.com as it encourages people to reach their goals and give them the tools that will help get there. If I can help my sport in some small way by posting the odd bit of advice here and there it makes me happy. I'm 38 and don't have much time for the usual carry on on internet forums, the StrongLifts Community is polite and everyone seems to really want to help the other SL members reach their goals. Also we all have similar goals, we all want to improve and be stronger.

I wish I'd had access to StrongLifts.com when I first picked up a barbell 20 years ago. StrongLifts 5x5 is probably the best, most accessible program available for that I've seen. To anyone who says these methods don't work, I just say to you they do. All my early progress can be attributed to the same methods that you'll find on StrongLifts and all my later progress grew out of those methods.

I've been very lucky over the years to train with some incredibly strong men including some professional strongmen and competitive bodybuilders. The one thing they have in common is that both groups go into the gym to progress in some way, and in a way they can measure. Also when you actually watch them train they actually use very similar methods, big compound lifts with increasing measured effort.

Finally I'd just like to add that in the time I've been a member, which is now almost three years, since January 2008, it's been good to see the number of StrongLifts Members who've increased their lifts. SL was mainly full of beginners when I joined but now there are quite a few elite lifters here. The system obviously works.

-SL Member Jim aka "Jim Slade", 38, Yorkshire UK.

***“I once thought that I was just too old to do these things.
Now that I can do that I feel much younger, and I
don't consider myself old anymore.”***



I am 39 years old now and being a scientist, until one and a half years ago, the hardest exercise I had ever done during the previous 20 years of my life was striking keys on a computer keyboard all day long.

However, in my early teens, I was quite active. I trained as a sprinter and was competitive in my home country (Soviet Union at that time). I won lots of regional competitions (OK, also lost a lot them, should be added for completeness) and once got to a final at a national level. I was also quite strong: 10 muscle ups and a single one arm pull up with my right hand. I was particularly very proud of my one arm pull up because I was able to totally humiliate my bodybuilding buddies by doing that (they would try and just hang on the bar not being able even to bend their arm).

When I decided to study seriously at a university (I was 17 at that time), I quit sport and never did anything physically related seriously in the following 20 years. I was quite athletic for some time. But 20 years of doing nothing undid everything. I became fat and weak. I still had a self-image of being athletic, but that was just an illusion.

I came to a point when I was not able to do a single proper push up and doing pull-ups was totally unthinkable for me. I developed pain basically everywhere (knees, shoulders, elbows, lower back, Achilles tendon). I tried to avoid doing anything involving physical activity, but it just did not work. The pains I had did not become better, but they were getting worse and worse actually.

So about 3 years ago, I started thinking about how to get rid of the pain. I found a book about soft tissue work and trigger point massage helped a lot in getting rid of the pain in my joints. But it did not work 100% and whenever I would do something "strenuous", the pain would return again. The author recommended to combine soft tissue work with exercises in order to get rid of the pain permanently. So I started searching what to do.

I searched the web and found many sites with loads of contradicting information. I found Mehdi's StrongLifts.com very helpful because it had very nice descriptions of how to do the various exercises. But I did not start doing Mehdi's StrongLifts 5x5 program right away because I had "lots of reasons" to believe that this was not a proper way to train. This was of course based on the information I got from a huge number of other internet sites that advertised bodybuilding style training.

But I kept an eye on StrongLifts.com because it had a nice Community where Members posted their training logs and I could see for my self if this training method worked or not. Gradually I was more and more inclined to try the StrongLifts 5x5 program simply because many people were getting great results. I was particularly impressed by a 53 year old guy, Chas (page 183), who was basically in the same boat as me before starting to train, but in just one year of training was capable of lifting weights I could only dream about at that time. And I am actually 17 years younger than Chas. My only concern was that I had pain in the knees and shoulders. And how can you squat and press like that 3 times a week? This was really a big concern for me.

But I had to take a leap of faith and I never regretted. I joined the SL Community in January 2009 and started to train as laid out in the Mehdi's book, starting with the empty bar everywhere, except for the deadlift. My bodyweight was about 100 kg (I am 190cm tall) with about 18-20% bodyfat. Squatting 3 times per week did not make my knees worse. I still had to do a lot of soft tissue work, but over time my knees were getting slowly better. In about two months, it was too hard for me to follow the program and I was about to deviate from it (I actually deviated for a few weeks). But at that time, Mehdi launched his coaching program and I joined it.

Mehdi put me back on the SL program and changed my diet. I started to follow the SL Diet, and my training became much better right away. I was getting stronger and losing fat at the same time. Mehdi also improved my lifting technique substantially. I trained under Mehdi's supervision for 4 months, and I enjoyed these months quite a lot. Training with Mehdi taught me the real secret of getting stronger: consistency. That was simply because he put so much energy into analysis of my training that I would feel very embarrassed if I did not show up for the next workout.

After about 6 months of doing SL5x5, Mehdi and I decided it was time to switch to an intermediate training program. I trained using the StrongLifts Intermediate program for another 6 months, and then I did 2 cycles of the StrongLifts Advanced program.

Vlad's Gains	Jan 2009	July 2010	Gains so far...
Age	37y	39y	
Body-weight (6'3)	100kg	100kg	
Deadlift	60kg	201kg	+141kg
Squat	20kg	162,5kg	+142,5kg
Bench	20kg	100kg	+80kg
Press	20kg	75,5kg	+55,5kg

I once thought that I was just too old to do the above things. Now that I can do that I feel much younger than before, and I don't consider myself old anymore. My bodyweight is the same as when I started, but you can see on the pics that I lost fat and gained muscle.

I am basically free now of any chronic pain, and I can do a lot things which I could not do before: push ups, pull ups, jumping with my son from 1 meter height when we play without risking any injury (my 3 year old son likes to jump a lot), running when I wish, lifting heavy objects. No need for a warm up before doing this. Just a couple of years ago, trying to do any of those things could lead to an immediate injury.

I would really recommend the StrongLifts 5x5 program to any individual who wants to get back in shape, lose fat and gain muscle and get stronger at the same time. One can put a lot of science into why this program is supposed to work, but the most important thing is that this program also works great in reality (not just in theory), and it's a very simple program as well, which makes it quite easy to stick to and follow.

-SL Member Vladislav aka "Vlad", 39, Denmark.

2 quick success stories posted on the StrongLifts Facebook Fan Page....

"Mental Strength & StrongLifts: I am so thankful for StrongLifts because It has helped me through the toughest financial and emotional crisis I've had in years. Day after day, I looked for work and couldn't get a callback. My savings was being depleted and there seemed no way out. The mental discipline of going to the gym when I'd rather curl up in bed and feel sorry for myself was priceless.

Refusing to eat junk food, staying positive, FORCING myself to hit the weights when I felt like giving up has made me a much stronger person- Physically and mentally. I've landed a good paying job with wonderful supervisors and co-workers, and great benefits was my payday!

KICKER: My new job almost didn't manifest because I was going to skip the interview because I was so discouraged....StrongLifts helped my mental strength to give it one more shot, and guess what? I nailed the interview, and got the job and am enjoying life!!! THANKS MEHDI- YOU THE MAN!!!"

- Ken Lucas, Aurora, Colorado.

"Ken, your post could have been written by me. I injured my back last year, was off work, had spinal surgery in November 09. Had a whole host of pain problems still to this day. Could not lift regular for some time, but when I was able to resume on a steady basis, it did wonders for my mental outlook. Could not find a job for the longest time, afterall, who wants to hire a guy 47 years old with a history of back problems. Recently was hired into a career position and life is now looking good. Lifting and the support network with keeping a log has kept me focused and determined to never give up in life. My log is yochim531, if you care to see some more of what I have been through. Congrats to you in your success!"

- David Yochim, 47, Leavenworth, Kansas.

“Strength training effects more than your body, it also transforms your attitude and outlook.”

My name is Jeff, I am 40 years old and live in Denver, Colorado, USA. I am self-employed as an insurance broker.

I started running to train for sports in middle and high school, and continued throughout college. I graduated high school at 18 weighing 132 lbs at 5' 9.5" and then college at 21 about 150 lbs. I have an ectomorph build, with light bone structure (I can grip my thumb and middle finger around my opposite wrist).

From my mid twenties to mid thirties I stopped running. I was so focused on work, then family, that I became one dimensional and stopped exercising. In my late thirties, I got back into running to stay in shape and ward off weight gain, and worked up to 25-30 miles a week. With running and then training for a marathon, I became lean. I weighed 158lbs.

Then I decided that I needed to get strong again. In my teens and early twenties, I used to lift weights to train for sports. I returned to resistance training around February 2008. My workout routine came from an old "Gold's Gym book" which I've had since the eighties! I worked out with a four day split; alternating between legs, back, biceps, then chest, shoulders, triceps. After each workout, I ran from 30-60 minutes. I now realize that this was a body builder routine.... I did all the typical stuff; leg press, leg extensions, leg curls, preacher curls and other machines. The only thing I did with a barbell was bench press. I did this basic routine until the end of 2008 with no real results.

In 2009, I switched gyms and hired two different "trainers". I did more machines and exercises like squats while standing on a Bosu ball with light dumbbells on the theory that this would strengthen my "core." I feel that this was just a rehash of the club's flavor of the day in workout theory. I also did (gasp) smith machine Squats and lunges, and smith machine seated overhead press. My strength did not increase, I gained no muscle size, and I did not receive any advice about diet. I also did way too much cardio which worked at cross purposes to my goal of getting bigger and stronger.

I was frustrated by my lack of muscle and size gains after a year and a half of working out on machines and running. I had little to show for my effort other than being defined. I thought I had "bad genetics" since I've always been small boned and thin. While running I weighed 158lbs. After resistance training for almost 18 months, I got up to about 160lbs.

I started doing research on the internet, and came across StrongLifts.com around the beginning of October 2009. The success stories were motivating but I was skeptical whether they were real and not pure hyperbole. Frankly, you read a lot of useless stuff in fitness magazines, and on other websites.

I wasn't sure I'd be able to stick to the SL5x5 routine doing the same exercises for a long period of time. I had been told that it was necessary to "confuse muscles" by changing routines every 8-12 weeks. I was also worried that I'd become bored doing the same exercises. And I was concerned about Squats because prior trainers and gym-goers told me Squats can hurt your knees....

I liked that Mehdi didn't try to sell me a super secret patented workout program only

available for 10 payments of \$X, some magical supplements to make me huge in 2 months, or require purchases of special equipment for large outlays of cash. I also was attracted to the fact that SL5x5 was a simple program that would take me through many months of progress without steroids and spending hundreds of dollars a month on supplements. The best part was that Mehdi gave his SL5x5 program for free! Nothing was secret, and his website gave you everything you needed to know to do his program.

Mehdi made it easy. All you needed was "under one roof," the website. Mehdi performed the hard work of distilling a large and confusing body of information into a form that anyone could assimilate and learn at their own pace. I found myself spending hours reading the book, and blog posts about exercise form and nutrition, and logs of SL Members which described their struggles, thoughts about SL5x5 and exercise philosophy, and motivations.

What got me on board to try the StrongLifts 5x5 program was that if it didn't work "as advertised" I could always stop whenever I chose. I wasn't locked in. I also knew that the bodybuilder routines and machines weren't working for me, and I was willing to try something different. The metric I would measure the program by were the results. If I didn't get results then I would stop and try something else. So, I gave myself a deadline of 3 months, and then I would reassess whether Stronglifts 5x5 was effective.

I decided to stop running and focus on weight and muscle mass gains with the compound exercises and by improving my diet. I started Stronglifts 5x5 on October 27, 2009. I had a base of strength from my resistance training on machines between February 2008 and October 2009, but really was a runner. I had not done Squats since college (about 20 years ago, and with what I now know was terrible form) and had never done deadlifts or Overhead Presses!

Jeff's Gains	Oct 2009	Dec 2010	Gains so far...
Age	39y	41y	
Body-weight (5'9.5")	160lbs	187lb	+27lb
Deadlift	135lb	340lb	+205lb
Squat	115lb	315lb	+200lb
Bench	115lb	220lb	+105lb
Press	85lb	150lb	+65lb

I have gained 27 pounds in 8 months. I am not fat, I can still see my abs, and don't have a gut. I've gotten bigger, and stronger than I have ever been in my life. My chest and shoulders have grown. My medium sized shirts stretch across my chest and back, whereas before Stronglifts 5x5 they were loose.

The biggest change in my physique is that I've grown a butt and big thighs. While running 5 days a week, I had a flat butt and skinny legs. My pants have gone from 30 inch waist while running to a size 34 inch waist simply because my legs no longer fit into the smaller sizes. My size 34-36 inch cotton boxer shorts stretch around my thighs! Finally, my arms have also become larger.

A trainer at my first gym switched last month to my new gym. He hadn't seen me in 17 months. I walked up and said "Hi, I remember you." He said, "Wow, I barely recognized you. You've gotten so much bigger!" My reply was, "Yup, 27 pounds." It gives me added

confidence. I have a feeling of accomplishment every time I grab the bar and push or pull more weight than the last time. The weight room is "my sport." It's my hobby, and it is addicting. I've always felt small. I don't any more....

Mehdi made observations about his experiences with exercise, the compound lifts, and exercise's impact on his own life. Exercise effects more than your body, it also transforms your attitude and your outlook. I know it may sound pollyannaish but I believe it is true. Just look up the definition of my member name inside the StrongLifts Community "Panglossian!"

I regret not finding SL5x5 when I was in my teens. I wish I had these strength and size results back in high school and college. I graduated high school at 18 weighing 132 lbs (at my current height of 5' 9.5") and then college at 21 about 150 lbs. I feel I would have had more success in sports with greater strength, and more confidence with the size gains that StrongLifts 5x5 gave me.

The most important thing is to define your goal. The program you choose needs to align with the results you need to meet your goal. If your goal is strength increases and weight gain, then you need a different approach from the person looking to solely lose weight. To lose fat and weight, long distance running plus dieting works but does nothing for strength, and probably reduced my overall strength! In fact if you're looking to lose weight, diet is even more important than exercise, although exercise keeps you on the right path!

However, if your goal is to run a marathon then long distance running is the program to reach that goal. I was always a long distance runner. One of my life goals was to run a marathon, which I did. I still run now, but less. Also, as per my training log, I feel I've lost some speed due to running while my legs are still recovering from Squats and Deadlifts. I am totally fine with losing some running prowess, I like the size and strength much more. It is a tradeoff that I am willing to make to achieve my size and strength goals.

I started doing SL5x5 in October 2009, but started my training log in May, 2010 when I hit 275lbs for 5x5 on Squats. I was worried that I wouldn't succeed so I didn't want to go public until I had something significant to report. I now regret that decision. I should have started the training log earlier. I've been amazed at how helpful other SL members have been in the two months I've logged. Holvoetn has really helped me a lot. He has been generous with his time, and suggestions in his posts. I realize that I'm not alone in working out, even though I have no training partner and don't socialize much at the gym. I look forward to going online and posting my training results, and reading about other SL Member's concerns and ideas. It helps keep me motivated.

The only "downside" is that StrongLifts 5x5 takes fortitude, discipline, and patience. It requires faith, and adherence to the routine as described. I'd recommend that you try it for 3 months. Really commit to the StrongLifts program for 3 months; both the exercise AND the diet. Stop running for the 3 months. After that you can judge the results for yourself. It worked for me! Once I started making strength and size gains I wanted to continue.

-SL Member Jeff aka "Panglossian", 40, Denver, Colorado.

“Lifting taught me to push through hard moments. You can not avoid difficult circumstances in life but you can change the way you handle them.”



Hi, my name is Nico, also known as SL Member "Holvoetn" or just "H". I am a 42-year old male of 180cm/5'11". I live in the same country as Mehdi, Belgium. My family consist of a lovely wife, a son of 12 and two stepdaughters of 27 and 30. The youngest daughter also has a son now so that makes me actually a grandfather. Not bad at 42, uh ?

I have done competition basketball from 7 to 14 and volleyball from 14 to 31, so I am not what you typically would call a couch potato. At age 31 I stopped sporting since there was too much demand from work combined with the fact I was playing in a team which was at national level, resulting in sometimes games taking the better part of a Saturday or Sunday only because of transportation and having to wait for the reserve team doing their game (main team and reserve team always travelled together). So I went back to school for 2 times 2 years on Saturdays to get some additional degrees.

Early 2008 I decided things were not progressing to my liking as far as my physical condition and appearance was concerned. I mean, I was growing a serious belly and was already tired from going up 1 flight of stairs! I started dieting and going for long walks with our dog (over 1hr). That already resulted in a drop of BW from 88kg to 80.5kg over 4 months. The consequence of this was that all my costume pants had to be taken in 2 sizes, my wife was NOT pleased about that at all! Though you can imagine I was.

Having done a lot of sport earlier but not having the time nor commitment anymore to engage in a team activity, I wanted to do something I could do on my own. I am a project manager for an IT consulting firm which means I go from project to project with various clients, sometimes multiple projects running at the same time. In practice this means I frequently have to get up very early (05h00) to avoid traffic jams when going for Brussels or Antwerp. On such days I am usually only home after 18h00. That schedule does not

leave too much time for a team activity knowing there are also other things to be done at home. No disrespect to those enjoying it but I already figured out a long time ago running or cycling were not my thing. It's too boring to my liking.

Around April 2008 I started going to the gym but not knowing better, I did the usual cardio stuff (treadmill and bicycle for 45 minutes, then some machine stuff for arms, chest, back and legs). The days I was unable to go to the gym, I did BW exercises at home.

I was getting a bit stronger over the next months (I could leg press 150kg for 8 reps by September 2008) but was wondering why those other guys were lifting free weights in the corner of the gym. I mean, not all of them looked that much stronger than me yet I did not see them doing the same stuff I was doing. From a logical point of view I figured free weights should be more beneficial than using machines, yet I did not know exactly why at that point in time. On the other hand it did not make sense to me why so many people were occupying the cardio machines and so little using the free weight area.

The PT at the gym told me it was still too early for me when I asked him about free weights. He did add some side and front delt raises to my program but that was the most he wanted to give in. So I decided to search for myself and that's how I ran into Stronglifts. I googled "Strength training barbell" and seem to recall Stronglifts.com was pretty high on the list (today it is #1).

The program was logical, simple and straightforward. The reviews were good, the StrongLifts Community was very supportive and unlike some other places I have seen. I started on Oct 10th 2008 with the Stronglifts 5x5 program and was immediately sold.

Nico's Gains	Oct 2008	June 2009	Nov 2010	Gains so far...
Age	40y	41y	42y	
Body-weight (5'11")	83kg	87kg	92kg	+9kg
Body -fat	27%	22,5%	17%	-10%
Deadlift	40kg	170kg	220kg	+180kg
Squat	40kg	155kg	180kg	+140kg
Floor Press	30kg	75kg	105kg	+75kg

As you can imagine end of 2009 I was back at the same weight of early 2008, I even added some weight, but with a huge difference. A lot less fat around the belly (there is still some but I am not focusing on getting rid of that), more muscle around shoulders and back and a lot stronger. I can see it, I can feel it, others see it as well.

People I haven't seen in quite some time have commented on this so I know it shows. The funny thing is that I have never been this heavy in my life and nobody believes me when I am being asked how much I weigh. As long as my pants still fit, I am planning to continue on this road getting heavier and stronger.

I dare to say starting lifting has changed my way of thinking in a positive way. One of the things it definitely did was make me aware about eating the right things and take care of myself. Not that I wasn't doing that already in the past but I am so much more aware now and it payed off. On the diet part my wife made a comment early on why I suddenly had seen 'the light'. It made me feel good since it indicated to me she was also seeing why I

was doing this.

What lifting also thought me was to be consistent and push through hard moments. You can not avoid difficult circumstances in life but you can change the way you handle them. This even transfers into real life. Whereas before I could easily accept someone saying some things could not be done, I will now look a lot more for alternatives, find ways to make it happen.

Endurance wise things also have improved for the better. I did do some cardio early in the program (mainly rowing after the lifting session) but soon stopped doing that because of time issues. Not doing cardio did not cause that much ill-effects. A flight of stairs is now taken 2 steps at a time without leaving me panting.

My wife mentioned some time ago I was getting a real V-shape. I can tell you, that comment really made my day! She is still in doubt about me lifting that frequently but I guess it is her uncertainty acting up since she is quite a bit older than I am. She is always in fear that I will run off with someone younger but from my side there is absolutely no reason for her to be afraid of that happening. It does indicate though that she thinks my 'market value' is increasing.

For other 40-year old guys in a similar situation I can highly recommend StrongLifts 5x5. The key is to be very consistent about lifting and to put in the work. Do the program as scheduled, don't change anything. There will be hard times, there might even be injuries and other setbacks but this also happens in real life. You need to learn how to deal with it and to carry on.

Speaking of injuries, mid February 2010, while starting a set of 5x190kg deadlifts, I pulled a muscle in my lower back. I waited some days and then started Starr's rehab protocol using deadlifts to make the muscle work and allow it to heal. On day 3 I was deadlifting 70kg with extremely bad form (a bad combination when your back is already fatigued from all the previous work) and I busted a disc between L5/S1. I have the MRIs to prove it. I had nerve problems. As in sciatic pain keeping me from work for almost 3 weeks. A pain shooting from the buttock down to the knee making it impossible to use that leg. Same pain which resulted in me being unable to sleep without aid of pain killers for 5 to 6 weeks.



After 2 months I restarted with weights, less than 50% for some of the lifts. I used the StrongLifts Intermediate scheme since it allowed to keep the intensity of the weight more or less constant over the week. I did however increase the weight from week to week based on my feeling. Looking back, it was not really a slow ramp.

One point which had changed was that I was a lot more cautious about form. Especially deadlifting gave me a lot of mental anxiety in the beginning. But I had to push through these hard moments, I had to work my way back up because I wanted it. This went on until end of May 2010 when I was almost at my previous strength levels again. I was able to advance even further, something which has been confirmed since all of my PRs of 2009 have been improved since. With the exception of some occasional nagging feeling, I have

to say there is no pain anymore.

Stats	Before injury	Nov 2010
Deadlift	210kg	220kg
Squat	170kg	180kg
Floor Press	90kg	105kg

The StrongLifts Community has been very supportive when things got rough. I got good pointers on technique from various Members (please forgive me for not listing your names but I am afraid I will forget some and that would not be fair. You know who you are). It was also very rewarding to post about a good workout and get the congratulations from others. It sort of kept me going, an incentive to make sure I would do my best the next session.

Somewhere in 2009 I was asked by Mehdi if I was willing to participate more as a StrongLifts Moderator. I was doing a similar thing on another board, so I had some experience already, and I was glad to accept to help the Stronglifts Community. Working with Mehdi makes you see an angle which is not always shown in his blogs or on the forum. He is very humoristic and can accept some joking around within the mod team but he can come back down to business in a snap. He is a guy with a very defined set of principles and he can be very hardheaded about it (which can work both positive as negative), though he is the first one to admit if something needs to be changed in order to improve certain things. In my professional career I have not encountered that much persons of his age showing the same level of professionalism.

Thanks again Mehdi for the SL5x5 program and the place you offer where we can share our experiences, raise our concerns, ask our questions. I have said it various times, I'll say it again: this community is for a large part reason of the success of the Stronglifts program!

-StrongLifts Member Nico aka "Holvoetn", 42, Belgium.

“ I regret all the wasted time, and that I didn't come across SL5x5 sooner. It would have been time better spent-- far more satisfying, and far better results.”



I first found Stronglifts via google. I was 39 years old and spending most of my day on a chair in front of a computer doing database design and system security work. I have fond memories of 20 years earlier in life doing grueling but enjoyable wrestling training. These were bodyweight and wrestling-only sessions; we didn't do weight training then.

In the decades that followed my teens and very early 20s, fitness for me was going to a typical fitness center and doing a random amount of machine weights with treadmill or elliptical work until I randomly decided I was done. My aim was to keep myself healthy and reasonably fit. These workouts felt unsatisfying, though I didn't know why. I didn't think about it much, really, so it wasn't a problem I ever thought about finding a solution for.

In retrospect, I think the dissatisfaction was partially masked by being happy I managed to find the time to do something, rather than skip yet another gym session. Some weeks I made it to the gym 3 times. Most weeks were less than that, and sometimes I'd go weeks without setting foot in the gym. I seemed to find it easier to skip the older I got. There was only modest progress in fitness, and not much progress to speak of with strength.

This dissatisfaction came to a head when I was 39. I remember going to the gym fairly consistently for awhile, but now I didn't feel I was even holding constant on strength. I was beginning to go backwards, especially on leg exercises. One exercise I would do frequently -- the leg press -- was becoming difficult to do because my knees were beginning to bother me. This dissatisfaction then became alarm and anger. I was only 39. The idea of having bad knees and giving up on maintaining even the modest level of strength I had was unacceptable to me. For the first time, it hit me that what I was doing was not working, and I needed to do something about it.

While stewing on this mid-workout, I happened to notice someone doing squats in the one power cage my gym had. I watched this guy for awhile. I don't think he was doing anything special-- sets with 185 on the bar (or something close-- at the time, I could not have told

you how much weight was loaded on a barbell from a glance). I thought back to vague memories from my youth of some kids talking about how free weights were "better", though it was never explained why. I'd always dismissed free weights. Weight is weight. And the machines seemed easier to learn and safer to do.

I was ready to try anything, as the ineffectiveness of what I was doing was undeniable. I came home and began googling anything related to "squat" I could think of. I don't recall the exact search terms, but I fortunately ended up on the Mehdi's website. At first, I didn't even realize there was a StrongLifts 5x5 program. I was spending all my time reading articles about proper form. The language was direct, clear and no-nonsense. None of my usual internet "this is bullshit" detectors were going off.

So the next day, I tried doing some squats with just the barbell in the gym. It felt great! Over the next two weeks, I added in overhead press, deadlifts and bench. Even with little to no weight on the bar, I felt like my body was working in a way it had not worked in years. As someone who trusts his own gut feel, things felt right. Not only was my body working, but these lifts weren't boring. I never realized how utterly bored I was with the machine training. Focusing on balance and technique felt so much more alive, more complete. This was the "better" of free weights, I realized. And even from the few sets I had done at this point, I felt this could lead somewhere with strength. I'd also learned from the SL site how to do all these exercises safely, from benching to squatting. I no longer had safety as an excuse in my mind for not bothering with barbells.

I then discovered the Stronglifts 5x5 Book and program. I read that several times. Given how my experimentation with barbell lifts already felt, SL5x5 made complete sense. It seemed the right amount of work done in a structured way. The idea of knowing exactly what I was going to do before I was even in the gym was new to me. Actually, I knew not only what I was going to do the next time in the gym, but for the next week or three. I knew I could measure progress and evaluate the program by seeing the weight increase. Any question I could think of was answered in the Book. I decided to start it immediately.

Paul's Gains	Aug 2008	Dec 2008	Dec 2009	Oct 2010	Gains..
Age	39y	39y	40y	41y	
Body-weight (6'3")		240lb	260lb	270lb	
Deadlift	100lb	295lb	550lb	655lb	+550lb
Squat	100lb	275lb	500lb	545lb	+445lb
Bench	90lb	225lb	315lb	365lb	+275lb

From August '08 to December of '08, I didn't miss a single SL session. I loved seeing the weight go up on the bar. I loved working on form, figuring out new things on every single session, slowly but surely going from terrible to decent form. One thing I remember from the Book: Mehdi said that it's unusual for someone new to the program to miss sessions. The motivation to see the weight go up on the bar provides a powerful incentive. This was absolutely true in my case. At that time, the only way I could get to the gym to do this was to get up at 5.30am, get a session in, get back to make breakfast for the family, then get into work. I was traveling more then, and I went out of my way to find gyms on the road where I could get in a by-the-book SL session.

My weight has continued to creep up since I started StrongLifts 5x5. The vast majority of

that weight must be muscle and bone; I certainly have less fat on my stomach than when I started. I never cared much about body weight I wasn't trying to lose body fat. I've worn the same sizes for 10+ years. I've had the same leather motorcycle jacket for 15 years. It used to be snug in the stomach and loose in the shoulders and arms. Now, it was snug in the shoulders and arms, and loose around the middle. My clothes seemed to fit better.

My knees no longer hurt, at all. They felt solid again. In fact, when I hear people insist that squatting is bad for the knees, I cannot even be bothered to respond to them anymore. Study the anatomy; try squatting properly. Squatting FIXED my knees, completely.

I could bound up 4 flights of stairs and not be winded, where every coworker was sucking air for the next 3 minutes. My posture was better. I was sleeping better; I was waking up without an alarm clock. My concentration for my work was improved. At risk of too much information, I was also much more regular. (Hey, as someone passing the 40 year mark, this stuff starts to matter as it is often an indicator of overall health.)

2009 was the year I was learning, slowly but surely, how to read myself and set my own program to make further progress. This would not have been possible AT ALL back when I first started StrongLifts 5x5 in 2008. It was really over a year of solid effort before I first began some modest attempts to change things up and figure out what worked best for me.

In retrospect, what I think is most peculiar about all this is in ANY other area of life, if I was setting out to do something, I am very likely to read up and study about whatever I was going to do. For whatever reason, I never took a thoughtful and considered approach to training, until I discovered Stronglifts 5x5. It was random stuff I slung together, based on random comments and bro-science tidbits I had picked up over the years. I regret all the wasted time, and that I didn't come across StrongLifts 5x5 sooner. It would have been time better spent-- far more satisfying, and far better results. I wonder what kind of progress I could have made if I was training this was in my 20s, rather than into my 40s.

I discovered a number of fantastic resources and numerous other websites. However, I always found myself on the SL site the most, because it had the best overall forum tone as well as being largely free of ego or other absurd hype, dogma or trash talk.

In the nearly 2 years that have passed since I've first started StrongLifts 5x5, I've had the opportunity to see several people I know personally around my age try SL5x5 as a result of my positive experience. All of them, without exception, have had the same or even better results. I'm nothing special; I just decided to take this training stuff seriously.

Follow the program, think about it, and above all work hard. I'd never done barbell work before, even as a kid when wrestling. If I can do it starting at nearly 40, so can any other 40+ year old.

SL Member Paul aka "Muddy" 41, Berkeley, CA

“My 515lb Deadlift would not have been possible had I not started StrongLifts because I would not have learned about how simplicity is good.”



I'm James Grant from San Diego, California, USA. I'm 42 and I've got an office job which means a lot of sitting. I've always been active and first started lifting weights when I was about 15 back in high school. But I never did an actual program. I spent a lot of time doing random lifts and following what I read in the latest magazines but nothing really ever made that much of a difference.

Fast forward several years to a guy who's in his mid 30's, has a 42 inch waist at 225, and who is big but not necessarily muscular. This is all from eating whatever I wanted to eat and not really having a good plan (or any plan) when I hit the gym. I mean I would go into the gym but I didn't have a plan on how to advance. Of course I couldn't figure out what I was doing wrong because nothing I was reading told me to keep it simple and progress on a regular basis.

Well, I decided to make a change to my life and correct my body composition. I went on a really strict eating plan and ended up over 20lbs lighter but really skinny. In the meantime I was learning more about strength training and became interested in squatting. See, squats were something I always avoided because of all of the horror stories and because I didn't know how to do them correctly. Fast forward to today and I've got a 425lbs squat, a 515 deadlift, a 315 bench, and a 235 OHP.

But let's back up a bit. When I first wanted to lose weight I tried upping my cardio but that got me nowhere. I was reading about this diet that included just meat and veggies and thought I might as well give it a try. It worked and it worked well. I managed to lose a couple of inches the very first month. I continued on this diet and did some really simple circuit type training (deads, squats, bench, etc) to get my heart rate going. I liked the results of losing fat but I wanted to get stronger too. I had already been doing some reading about simple strength training and simple progression and the weight loss really boosted my desire to get strong. I'm not totally sure what drove that desire just that I suddenly felt this urge to get stronger.

Well, I literally stumbled upon StrongLifts.com and really liked the simplicity of it and the no nonsense approach that Mehdi provided. What really attracted me to StrongLifts was that it was simple and easy to follow. It spelled out what to do, how often to do it, and how to get better. There were also plenty of tips on how to improve mobility, how to perform the lifts, and what to do if you stalled. Mehdi wasn't trying to sell anything or push his ways on anyone and I totally respected that.

My only concerns revolved around my age and being able to do the lifts that often while adding weight on continually. But I was getting nowhere with what I was doing for strength and I had already made one big change so why not change the way that I lifted weights?

For squats I started with 135 as I had been training on and off for so long and worked my way up to 315. I did suffer quite a bit of pain in my hip flexors and I attribute that to a combination of simply not being accustomed to all of that work and a lack of mobility. It took me a long, long time to really get to the point of not having mobility issues. When I say long time I mean over two years really. My bench went up but slowly as did my rows. My deadlift really improved though as I get better at squatting. It took a while for my form to get to where it needed to be there too and that was due to a lack of mobility. I got to where I could deadlift 315 or so for 5 reps with good form doing SL though.

James' Gains	Jan 2009	Nov 2009	Nov 2010	Gains so far...
Age	40	41	42	
Body-weight (6'2")	200lb	205lb	230lb	+ 30 lbs
Deadlift	135lb	475lb	515lb	+ 380 lbs
Squat	135lb	350lb	425lb	+290 lbs
Bench	235	315lb	315lb	+80 lbs
Press	145	215lb	235lb	+70 lbs

So today I'm 6'2" (I haven't gotten shorter), 42 years old, and 225. My waist went up two inches to 37 inches but my other measurements are also above where they were when I had a 42 inch waist so my chest looks that much bigger as do my glutes. I've received comments about people don't recognize me anymore after not seeing me for a while. I constantly get asked if I am a personal trainer or an athlete. It's been 17 years since people have made those types of comments to me.

My wife and family love the new me and love that I'm taking much better care of myself. I feel much more confident than I ever did and am much more willing to do things like talk to total strangers. There's a certain amount of confidence that you get as you get older but when you combine getting stronger along with getting older and it really boosts your confidence.

None of these lifts would have been possible had I not started StrongLifts because I would not have learned about how simplicity is good. I would not have learned about how important consistency is or how important it is to really hit the main lifts. There is so much "noise" in other places that it becomes quite hard to focus on the important stuff and forget about the stuff that's there to get in your way. It's also helped me tremendously with my mobility. Just today I was at the park with my son on my shoulders and I went into a full squat to pick up a tennis ball and I could easily just sit there in that position. There's no

way I could have done that three years ago and it is something that I'm quite thankful for.



I should disclose that I'm a moderator on the StrongLifts Community. But I'm a moderator because I believe so much in the program and in the community that Mehdi created. This program really works and it really sets the stage for the mindset that you need to get stronger than the average person. Mehdi might be a bit hard-headed and stubborn but he really nailed this program and the need for consistency and simplicity.

So if you're mid to late 30's or early 40's and think that you can't get anywhere I'm here to tell you that you can. Even if you have experience in the gym already the StrongLifts 5x5 program can really help you. I would start pretty light and really work on your mobility. The odds are that you're tight even if you don't think that you are. Read up on the mobility drills and do them daily. Then do the program as written for as long as you can. It's possible that you will stall earlier than others who are younger will but that's OK as it's still a great way of getting you stronger.

Make sure you start a training log as I have found those to be very motivational and really help to push me in the gym even when I don't feel like it. Knowing that you're going to have to write it down is quite inspirational. It's also really handy to have something to refer back to after some period of time.

-James Grant aka "atypical1", 42, San Diego USA.

“It's not what I imagined myself doing at this age, but I can't argue with the results. The mental and physical benefits from StrongLifts 5x5 are truly life-changing.”



My name is Keith. I'm 42, a graphic artist living in Vancouver, Canada. I'm 6'1" and holding at around 195lb. I'm quite the ectomorph, and weight just falls off me if I don't keep up my calorie intake.

I was a vegetarian for 17 years, from 1989 until 2006, due to a mix of idealism and health concerns. I was shocked at the difference in the environmental impact between producing a kilo of meat and producing a kilo of vegetable protein. The questionable ethics of the meat industry were (and are) hard to ignore. Hearing what I wanted to hear in news reports about the hormones, additives and "bad fat" in meat I concluded that cutting out meat from my diet was justifiable from both moral and health standpoints. I never felt unhealthy on a vegetarian diet, although I was always hungry due to an active lifestyle, and sugar was like heroin. Even with a lot of eating, I stayed skinny; 150lb was normal, with high-scores of 155 for a few days at a time now and then.

In university I thought I'd try to increase my upper body muscles since my legs were getting strong from mountain biking. I got up enough courage to go look at the school's brand new Nautilus centre. When I asked for a tour and introduction to the program, the trainer grabbed a clipboard and said, *"Okay, well, we're not going to see a lot of progress because of your body type"*. That misconception about my body and what I could potentially achieve with strength training stayed with me until I started getting progress with SL5x5, about 19 years later. I didn't sign up for Nautilus (of course) and wasted time on unfocused weight machines once or twice a week, not knowing what to do or how to do it. That lasted about two months.

I spent a lot of time at a desk and nursing my wife back from terrible injuries (she was hit by a car in Jan 99). My lifestyle was both stressful and sedentary for too long. Lack of aerobic fitness and a flabby mid-section told me I needed to get back into strenuous exercise. It was my "last chance" to attack this long-standing issue before turning 40 in September 2007. Goals were unclear. I just wanted to be able to do repeated sets of push-

ups, chin-ups and a single dip. I had my perpetual, vague notion of "wanting a bigger upper body".

From 1990 until my wife's accident in 1999, my activities included foot-bag, mountain biking, in-line skating, rock climbing, hiking, and windsurfing. Most of these activities altered, stopped or were reduced due to life changes (career changes, moving, marriage, returning to school in 1998, etc). After my wife's accident, I had no time for exercise for years. I started playing badminton once or twice a week in 2002 but it wasn't enough to get fit. I had always wanted to get a bigger upper body, and eventually began to look into weight-lifting.

I had a chin-up bar in my house in Japan back in 93-95 to help with my rock-climbing. I installed one in my Vancouver house in 2002 but it didn't get used much. I decided to start body-weight training (push-ups, pull-ups, assisted dips, etc) at home in March 2007. It was a good sweat and my numbers increased, but I didn't know anything about reps, sets, programs or eating to grow muscle so my gains were limited. I was still the same weight and had no plan on how to get significantly stronger or bigger.

With my 40th birthday looming, I joined the local community center and began to dabble on the weight machines. Like most people who join a gym, I was intimidated by starting into the free weights and Olympic bars. I didn't know what to do or how to do it. But the machines were easy to understand, so I just did sets of 10 reps on machines that worked parts I wanted to be stronger. Of course, when I saw someone doing something "cool" or interesting, I'd try that for a while. I was clearly looking for answers, but I didn't know how to ask the right questions.

Some time in the summer of 2007 I saw SL5x5 mentioned on a blog and read a few pages of Mehdi's posts. I didn't start the program, nor was I interested in joining the Stronglifts Community, but I learned about the need to have a program and to eat properly. I thought I should get a "base" of strength before moving to barbells, or something. I kept going with the weight machines and increased my eating. I started gaining a bit of weight.

I must have learned something from Mehdi, because I started keeping track of my workouts. Here's a sample workout from January 3, 2008: Vertical Bench Press Machine, Leg Extensions, Bicep Curls, Overhead Press Machine, Seated Leg Press machine, Bent-over Cable Pull-downs. What the hell was I doing?!

I was wasting time, but I was in the right frame of mind when I found StrongLifts 5x5 in my bookmarks again later that month. By then, Mehdi had his book available. I think I looked around at some training logs and saw the other StrongLifts Members increasing their weights each week. I figured that if I started light I wouldn't get into trouble right away and could stop if it got "heavy". I decided to give it a shot and commit to the program. I figured I'd try until the summer came and then maybe pick up some outdoor activities. This is Vancouver, after all; we move inside when it rains and outside for the other two days.

At first I was worried about potentially injuring something, especially my back, due to my age (40) and my body type (long, thin torso). I thought that heavy Olympic-style lifts were for young athletes with coaches. I'd had some weird back pain in the past from poor posture and moving furniture and was scared of going through my old age with a terrible back injury, cruising down the sidewalk in a scooter. SL5x5 just seemed "too much" somehow. I didn't know anything about barbell exercises and it seemed like a foreign

language. But like learning any language, once you get started, your understanding increases quickly..

Keith' Gains	Jan 21, 2008	July 2010	Gains so far...
Age	40	42	
Body-weight (6'1")	173lb	195lb	
Deadlift	135lb	370lb	
Squat	88lb	365lb	
Bench	88lb	225lb	

I started out thinking I'd stop when it got heavy. Now I can't stop because it's heavy. Two plates Bench, I'm still high from that. I started with heavier weights than recommended due to an honest, newbie mistake; I didn't know you were supposed to include the weight of the bar in the total. I thought lifting 20kg meant adding two 10kg plates to the bar. I wouldn't do that again, although I don't remember struggling. It was kind of embarrassing to be starting off so light in a busy gym, but as any Stronglifter knows, the weights increase quickly.

I peaked at 206lb in March 2010. If you'd told me when I started SL5x5 that I'd weigh over 200lb and Squat 365lb, I'd have wondered whom you thought you were talking to. It has honestly been one of the biggest achievements of my life. It is weird to be approaching 43 and to be in the best shape ever. I've never been stronger or bigger, but I still have the same old 33" waist. I'm very, very happy about this. I'm 40 pounds heavier than when I was a vegetarian, yet somehow I have managed to stay a moral, conscientious, healthy person. Imagine that! The only thing it has cost me is more food, a gym membership, and new pants to fit over my squat butt.



I was a vegetarian when I was in Italy, Greece and the Middle East in 2004-05. I had no problem with others eating meat around me, but I started to feel that I was missing out on once-in-a-lifetime culinary experiences. Before returning to Italy in September 2006, I decided to start eating meat again. Life is a one-time thing, and after 17 years of saying "no", it was time to start saying "yes" to interesting things while I had the chance. I realized that I'd stuck to my beliefs (in the face of sometimes very strong resistance) and made my point.

I loved what I ate as a vegetarian, and I ate a lot, but nothing has had the same effect on

my growth as returning to a meat-centered diet. I wouldn't say "100% no" to being a vegetarian on SL5x5, but I'd say you better GOMAD and perhaps should not expect the same kind of strength gains as if you were eating meat.

Since starting to eat meat again I haven't regretted it for a moment. There are still difficult issues regarding sourcing, animal welfare, chemicals and additives, etc. but I live in a region where there are options available to address these issues. In the meantime I have sampled some of the world's best food, including things that I would have missed if I'd stayed vegetarian. I ate a sheep's head (eye, brain, tongue and cheek) in Tunisia and it was fantastic. I still eat vegetarian sometimes because I like it. I'm very happy with my decisions to both stop and re-start eating meat.

I can't say my family has been exactly supportive, but I don't live near them so it hasn't affected me. My father is competitive and can't stand my weightlifting (he dismisses it on the prejudice that it requires no intellect). He weighs 165 and says things like "well, just don't injure yourself" and "when are you going to stop?" He's a good guy and he's happy for me, but he has never said "congratulations" about any of my PRs, and I've made him watch the videos. I hadn't seen my sister in 10 years and when she saw me she said, "You look exactly the same". My mother's first comment was of regret, saying "oh, if only you'd done this 15 years ago!" Other (more impartial) people have said, "whoa, you look different," "Holy crap, I'm going to have to remember to expect a very different person when you walk in the room" and "well, it seems you have undergone a major transformation". But the best is my wife, who bites my chest and says "mmm... Mama like!"

My new strength shows up in some surprising ways in daily life. My badminton backhand sends the birdie out past the opponents' baseline a lot more often. My tennis serve has doubled in speed. The confidence is something I didn't really expect. I move with a lot more ease, less tension, and just feel comfortable in my own skin in a way that is new to me. In recent family photos there is a big difference between the others and me; I look substantial, grounded and solid in a way that pleases me very much.

That imaginary back injury that I was so afraid of when I started out didn't happen. Well, I did do some heavy BBR with poor lower back form in my second or third month, and paid the price, but that healed in two weeks and hasn't come back. And I did get a compression pinch in my upper right back after a year and three months of squats but that was because I was racking the bar unevenly (one hook at a time). And I did get some hamstring trouble when going for my 5x5 PR in March this year, but that's because I ignored the pain in the fourth set and went for the fifth. Every injury that has happened has been because of something I did wrong and could have prevented with proper form and concentration.

My training log inside the StrongLifts community has been key, no, more than that: essential. I was a bit reluctant to start one at first, not being sure of myself and being a bit shy about commenting on others' logs when I didn't know much about lifting. But suddenly members I didn't know, from all around the world, were dropping supportive comments, questions and observations in my log. It's like any on-line community, but when you see people just like you getting stronger, going through setbacks, struggling and achieving new PRs as you do the same, it's a very bonding and encouraging experience.

I was supposed to meet up with SL Member Mouse in August 2009 for a beer when I was

traveling in the UK. I had to cancel because of family commitments, and to this day I feel worse about it than if I'd touched the bar while spotting someone on a new Bench PR. Who is this Mouse guy? I don't know, just someone on-line. But he's been there every time I've made a post in my log, offering support and encouragement and pushing me on to my next PR. The SL community is a crucial part of SL5x5. I've seen some people drop out because they never got into the community, never participated by asking questions and encouraging others. Eventually SL members stopped going to check on their logs, and soon they stopped posting. Simple.

The growth of Stronglifts since 2007 has been astounding, but I've never felt it affected the simple truths of the program. People still track their progress and that of the ten or so other members they follow, some junior, some senior and some around the same level. There are some names I recognize from the earliest days on SL5x5 and lots I've never heard of. Everyone is going through the same program and it is startling to realize that I'm getting to be one of the senior members, especially compared to the recently-joined 40 year-old guy who wants to start SL5x5 but is worried about hurting his back.

StrongLifts has given me focus and information that I have found to be too difficult to get elsewhere. It was the right thing at the right time for me, and I can't believe how good I feel on this program. It's not what I imagined myself doing at this age, but I can't argue with the results. The combination of mental and physical benefits from this program are truly life-changing, and I don't know what kind of thanks is really appropriate for that, other than to tell others that Mehdi's program pays off in real results. My hat is off to you, Mehdi. You have created something very positive and unique.

I want to add a quick bit about my wife in here, since she has been doing SL5x5 for almost two years now. In January 1999 a speeding car hit her while we were walking home. Her recovery has been difficult, painful continues still. She fought hard to get well enough to leave her wheelchair, to quit her crutches, and to eventually walk without her cane, and once she got on Stronglifts and started squatting, she has never looked back. She has built strength, balance and confidence in ways that amaze her doctors. She has reduced or eliminated all her medications, has beaten depression and is shedding unwanted fat. The stronger she gets, the less pain she feels. She can tell her own story some time, but I wanted Mehdi and the other StrongLifts members to know how deeply transforming SL5x5 can be.

Either start the program or don't. When you really want to make a change, the program will be here, changing bodies and changing lives. Look around at any training log with 30 pages inside the StrongLifts Community. Look at page 1, then look at page 30. If you don't see results that you would like to have for yourself, then SL5x5 is not for you. A huge part of life is just showing up and doing what is expected of you. Join SL5x5, show up, do the work, and when your log is 30 pages long you'll wonder why you didn't start sooner.

-StrongLifts Member Keith aka "KIB", 42, BC, Canada.

“ I remember my days prior to strength training and can't help but marvel about the simple yet powerful approach StrongLifts has provided me.”

Hi, I'm Guru from India. I'm 42 years old, 160cm (5'3") tall with 59kg BW. I have always been a fit person, not overweight, slightly underweight (not skinny) but never really strong.

In June 2008 my 6 yr old son hurt his fingers in a doorframe and started crying. Since wife was busy cooking, I ran to him, sat down (squatting, it's natural for us Indians) and held him close, comforting him. When I tried to get up holding him, I found that I couldn't. My legs buckled. I had to take support of the wall to get up, and he's real skinny, only about 12 kgs at most. I was stunned and that was my wake-up call. I decided better late than never and joined a gym. I was almost 41 yr old that time.

The gym did a physical assessment, somehow decided that I was quite strong and put me on to a 3 day split BB routine. Since I didn't know much about lifting at that time, I just went along. 3 months passed, but there was no real improvement and I started doubting my own decision. Then I suddenly developed a weakness in my left arm. After waiting for a couple of weeks, I went to a doctor who said it was a minor shoulder injury & prescribed complete rest. After about a month's rest, I was ready again to hit the gym.

In the meantime I had been reading articles on the internet about lifting & came across StrongLifts 5x5. Initially I was a bit taken back by the concept of squatting 3 times a week and working your full body every time. However, I read the posts in the SL Community & some of the training logs of Stronglifts Members – the progress some of the guys had made was amazing. Now the decision was crystal clear – If I had to gain strength I needed to get on Stronglifts 5x5. That was end November 2008.

Initially it did feel funny – starting with empty bar on the Squats & Deadlifts. On the presses I even started lower, concerned about my shoulder. Never squatted below parallel with weights before, never did a barbell press before.

Guru' Gains	Nov 2008	Dec 2009	Gains so far...
Age	41	42	
Body-weight (5'3")	54,5kg	59kg	+3,5kg
Deadlift	35kg	125kg	+90kg
Squat	20kg	100kg	+80kg
Bench	30kg	65kg	+35kg
Press	10kg	45kg	+35kg

Since then I've come a long way. For the first time in my life I crossed 55 kg BW. I have continued with strength training thereafter. It is like an addiction getting stronger. The lift figures speak for themselves. The OHP may seem smallish, but it's over 0.75BW & frankly I would never have thought that I could lift 45kg overhead. And I never had any issue with my shoulder again. I do feel that my lifts are a bit low where the shoulder muscles are involved – bench, press – but no pain.

I can now get up from squatting position with both my sons sitting on my shoulders. It's very easy. I do not have a physical job, but recently when we went on a vacation, I had to carry my younger son up & down a trek (about a km uphill & 3 km downhill) since he got tired. It was quite manageable.

At work, I inspired two of my colleagues to start working out. I didn't talk them into it, I just talked almost everyday about how good it felt to work out.

In March 2009 I enrolled for Mehdi's coaching program for 2 months. The first thing that impressed me was the amount of information he asked from me. Current lifts, last 5 workouts, body measurements, pictures, diet & the objectives. He sure has a very systematic approach to the coaching.

Best thing that happened during this was that I got my technique nearly perfected for squat & bench, and it was reassuring to know from Mehdi himself that my deadlift technique was already quite good. Earlier I had developed a tendency to deload at the first signs of failure. However, Mehdi impressed upon me that when the weight gets to your max, slight compromises are to be accepted & tried to improve upon. He made me increase the weight every time I got all the reps. Really helped move my bench & press up.

Getting protein is not an issue in India, except that whey is expensive and being a vegetarian I have to resort to whey. Another thing is non availability of cottage cheese. However, eggs are available, and so is milk. Worst difficulty that I faced is that it's almost impossible to get chalk here. Luckily my brother is in UK & I asked him to bring some when he came on a vacation.

I cannot emphasize enough the contribution of the StrongLifts community & the SL Members in the improvement in my strength. I found so many friends in this community. More are in the making. Most of this is due to my training log, which I started right in the beginning. It's a great source of motivation – not only my own log, but others' as well. I can recall quite a few occasions when I was feeling down & then I went through someone's training log and felt my attitude completely changed. My wife is not anti-lifting, but does not share my interest or enthusiasm about it – meaning, I can't discuss my gym time with her nor share my small triumphs. So the only place to share them is inside the SL community.

If you're in a doubt that it is too late to gain strength, there are ample examples to the contrary. I am just one of them. Even today when I squat with 100kg across my back, I remember my days prior to strength training and can't help but marvel about the simple yet powerful approach StrongLifts & particularly its community has provided me.

Just get in the gym and start with an empty bar, even if it seems ridiculous. Concentrate on perfecting your technique (The SL community is awesome in this regard – post your videos & you'll get so many constructive comments). Increase weight per workout till you fail. In short – follow the program to the letter. When you can't progress anymore, switch to 3×5 first and then opt for an intermediate routine like Madcow.

-StrongLifts Member Gurunath aka "Guru", 42, Mumbai, India.

“It works for skinny kids looking to grow big and it works for middle aged guys needing to get stronger and healthier.”



A little about myself: 44y old, 6'1", 225lbs. September 2007 I got on the scale and looked down at 307lbs. I was fat, and couldn't get up a flight of stairs without getting winded. My joints hurt and my 42 waist pants were tight. I was miserable and decided I had enough.

At my wife's insistence we joined a gym and started working out. I changed my diet to NO fast food or pre-made processed foods. I started eating breakfast, which I used to skip. I ate low-carb with lots of veggies and meats, fish and dairy with a few berries and nuts. Not exactly Atkins, but my own diet of no sugar, no bread, no potatoes, etc...but a lot more variety than a lot of low-carbers with lots of cardio and machines.

I could barely do 20min on the treadmill and lift fairly low weights on the machines. There were a few machines I couldn't even fit on. My gym offered a circuit room with a similar setup to a "Curves." I spent a lot of time in building basic fitness while dropping pounds.

When I got to about 260lbs I realized I wanted more from my workouts and needed to get to the free weights and work a plan with some goals rather than just messing around with the machines I liked. I did a lot of web surfing and followed a fairly common 3 day a week body separation program for a couple of months.

I discovered StrongLifts 5x5 while surfing for information on squats. I started squats on the Smith machine on advice from another gym buddy, but shortly realized I should be doing full squats in a power rack. My squat and dead lift form sucked. My lower-back was one of my weak points. Even though I came a long ways with my weight loss and I thought I had some fitness, I was basically starting from scratch on StrongLifts 5x5.

After 1 year and 3 months hard work including 6 months on StrongLifts 5x5 I feel great! I feel a heckofalot better at 44 than I did at 34. When I started SL5x5 I was 237lbs, but without near as much muscle. Now I'm at 17.6% BF 225lbs and I'm wearing 34 jeans. My journey started well before StrongLifts 5x5 over 300lbs in the fall of 2007. I think I crested close to 315lbs but started dieting and working out at 307lbs. So I'm not far from a 100lb weight loss (that's almost a SuperModel.)

When I got married about 12 years ago I was about 215lbs and wore size 38 pants. I'm now back down to 225lbs and can wear 34 comfortably. Ok, here's the cool part; my original wedding ring does not fit. It's too big. It falls off my finger. It's actually fallen off 3 times lately and I was lucky to find it. That says a lot about how my body has changed. It's cool to think that I was lighter then but fatter than I am now. I am no longer worried about the scale. It's all about body fat and measurements from here on out.

It's been over two years since I found StrongLifts 5x5 and I'm still following the program and still getting stronger. I can now Squat 285lbs 5x5 and I started with the bar. It's not always been smooth and there have been a lot of challenges but if you can take anything from my experience it would be persistence. My issues were not my age so much but my years of inactivity, being over weight, sitting at a computer all day, etc... I'm not the 18 year old skinny kid looking to get stronger, I'm the 42, now 44 middle aged family man working to regain control of my life and cure myself of years of sitting at a desk and inactivity. It works for skinny kids looking to grow big and it works for middle aged guys needing to get stronger and healthier.

I believe it took me a year to get to "normal." A year to get to decent core strength and mobility levels that would actually allow me to move forward with strength gains. It took me a while to just get "healthy" enough to lift. If you're really struggling and it doesn't seem like you're making any headway realize that if you keep at it, eventually you'll start adding weight and moving forward. Even when you're stuck and it seems all your doing is de-loading, if you keep at it, it will work itself out eventually.

I had a lot of weeks of 2 workouts or only did Squats once rather than 3 times. I never gave up on the program. I didn't change it. I didn't add anything or substitute anything. I just struggled. Several times I've let myself stick at a certain weight far too long rather than pushing through. The thing is you really gotta add weight. Even if you just grab those little 2.5's that's still an increase. Loading up the bar and watching other people in the gym can seem a daunting task. Take your time. Go at your own pace but keep loading the bar. Listen to your body and do what you have to do but keep pushing through.

StrongLifts and its SL Community is one of the best things that's ever happened to me. Reading through the forum I've found a lot of other like minded Members that I could learn from and contribute to. Thanks guys.

I think what is difficult for people to grasp is the simplicity of StrongLifts 5x5. Workout A, workout B, just 3 exercises, really? Really, and it just takes a short amount of time to complete. Granted, as you get to heavier weight you will need more time between sets, but that's it. No machines, no split routines, no leg day, just barbell compound exercises that use all your muscles all the time.

Follow the program and keep it simple.

-SL Member Scott aka "Cleave", 44, Tennessee USA.

“StrongLifts took my abilities to heights that I never would have dreamed possible. I still have a hard time believing I can load up 515lbs onto my back and squat. “



I am Norman from Gunter Texas. I am the Director of Information Technology for a financial services company. I do a lot of sitting at work. Sedentary life style for 20+ years was my biggest mistake. It almost cost me my life.

In my youth I played baseball for two years, soccer for eight years, and rugby for 2 years. Was also an avid bicyclist and a lifeguard, did a lot of swimming. Weight was in the low 200's. Then after college I let myself go. Quit exercising. Over the course of about the next 20 years I ballooned up to over 350 pounds. Had no real concern to do anything about it. A few attempts at weight loss with no success.

June 3rd 2008 changed all that. That is the day I had a heart attack. Everything has changed and will never be the same. My Dr. told me to lose weight by any way that I could. The only diet I had any success with was the Atkins Diet so that is what I went with. For exercise I chose walking. I walked a lot. 1+ hours a day 5 to 7 days a week. I also completed six weeks of cardiac rehab which involved treadmill, dumbbells, and recumbent cycle. Dumbbells started at 7 pounds. I was up to 10 pounds at the completion of rehab.

By December of 08' I had my weight down in the 290's. Winter put a damper on things as I walk outside and it was getting just too cold. Gained some weight over the winter, but once spring came around I started walking again. Weight came back down, I was fluctuating between 292 and 305 pounds. I decided I needed to add more than just walking to my routine. A friend at work got me into weightlifting.

I started out lifting a different body part every day of the week. Pick a machine that was available lift failure, add more weight lift to failure. Repeat for 6 sets or so. Would try to get in 5 exercises. No real plan in place. I was making some decent gains, but with method to my madness not really sure how I was progressing. I remember though struggling to bench 225 pounds for 6 reps. I also remember attempting to squat in a smith machine. I could not fit in the machine. Did not like trying to squat in it at all. In fact there were a lot of machines I could not fit into. A press machine I would max out at 120 pounds.

I discovered StrongLifts 5x5 by doing a search on the internet. I was looking for something simple to follow. I was not really interested in getting strong or gaining muscle. My main concern at that time was still weight loss. I read Mehdi's book and knew immediately this

was I wanted to do. I don't think anything could be laid out any easier. I did not have to know any data about what my 80% of 1 rep max or how many times can I lift X amount of weight 8 times, but not 9 times. Start with an empty bar and go from there. I started my first workout with an empty bar. 6'4" 305 pounds of me with an empty bar, for sets. I am sure that was quite a site. I did bump up the weight a little more aggressively after that.

Norman's Gains	August 2009	December 2010	Gains so far...
Age	43	44	
Body-weight (6'4")	305lb	320lb	+15lb
Blood Pressure	40%	35%	-5%
Deadlift	95lb	501lb	+406lb
Squat	45lb	515lb	+470lb
Bench Press	45lb	315lb	+270lb

This is before/during for me. I am still on StrongLifts 5x5. Started at age 43, body fat was probably around 40%. Not a happy time in my life I really did not want to know what it was. Today age 44, same height, weight is now around 320 pounds. Yes, even at over 300 pounds I have managed to put on weight. This is not easy to deal with mentally, but I looked at my back the other day, for the first time in a very long time. Looks like I have added a lot of muscle to my back and shoulders, hard to tell through all the hair though, lol. 35% body fat going with the Navy measurement. I am still not happy with my body fat, but now I feel like I am on the right path to do something about it. My clothes are fitting good again. Forearms, calves, and shoulders are now pretty close to being fat free and I can see fat subsiding from other areas

Squats 5x5 470 pounds 515 pound 1 rep max. Deadlift 3x5 445 pounds, 500 pound one rep max. Bench press 5x5 250 pounds 315 pound 1 rep max. I still have a ways to go on StrongLifts 5x5 these numbers are all going to go up. I get a look of looks. Not because of my looks, but because of what I can lift. Have a bar loaded to 225 pounds sitting on ground and someone walks by and asks if it is deadlift day. No, it is time for rows. I get most comments about squats and that I squat very low.

I just completed my first powerlifting meet. It was both humbling and exciting, I can not wait to do another one. I put up a 451lb squat, 275lb bench press, and 501lb dead lift for a 1227lb total. I am very pleased with this for my first meet. It is a lot harder to lift in front of an audience with people judging you than at the gym. I have played many sports in my life, but this is the first time I have individually performed in a competition. Everyone there was very friendly. There was plenty of people cheering me on and offering advice. The best compliment I got was during deadlift, with a guy yelling "put some weight on the bar", there was "only" 501lbs on the bar, but it was easy. I took first place for Masters Raw SHW division. It is very rewarding. I also learned a lot in mistakes that I made, that will make my next competition even better. I highly recommend anyone lifting to go compete.

Lifting heavy weights does not increase blood pressure; it has decreased blood pressure for me, even being obese. My blood pressure while I was sedentary was always 140's – 150's / 90's – 100's. Over time my blood pressure has been dropping as I exercise more and burn more calories. A lot of walking for a year then diving into StrongLifts has allowed me to lower my blood pressure to acceptable levels. While I was on blood pressure

medication for awhile I have been off of blood pressure medication for over a year now. At my last checkup my blood pressure was 125/70 and in June my triglyceride to hdl ratio was less than 2. This is without any medication.

At the time of my heart attack my triglyceride to HDL ratio was more than 3/1. HDL was only in the 30's and triglycerides in the high 100's. LDL and triglycerides can be controlled with food. Triglycerides, for me, are directly tied to sugar. When I do not eat sugar they go down, when I do eat sugar they go up. LDL is trickier, but it seems it follows triglycerides. As of late I have started eating more carbs/sugar and they are going up. HDL on the other hand is very hard to control with diet; even drugs have a hard time with HDL. That leaves actual body weight and exercise. As I have been exercising more and lately lifting very heavy my HDL is going up, almost 20 points higher since my heart attack. I got to cut back on the carbs and sugar. Sure, like anyone else, I want bigger muscles. But, I can wait on those to keep my vitals in check, and I am not done with linear progression yet.

I was "fortunate" with my heart attack in that it was a minor one. I did have angioplasty; they run a tube into your femoral artery look around with a video camera. They find blockage and inflate a balloon to aide in fixing the blockage. Mine was not extreme enough to require a stint. A stint would have slowed down my recovery and kept me on medication longer. My Dr. encourages me to lift weights. My heart can handle it fine. I have never had any heart issues lifting weights. I did not rush into lifting weights after my heart attack. Other than the 7-10lbs dumbbells I lifted during cardio rehab, I waited a year before lifting weights. If you have had a heart attack, consult with a Dr. before doing any form of exercise, let alone weight lifting. As long as your Dr. approves I say lift heavy.

I felt good enough that I joined a soccer league and played an entire season of outdoor soccer. I had a lot of fun. A remembrance of my youth, that really made my year. Truth be told I was a fairly strong individual before ever weight lifting. But, what SL 5x5 let me see about myself, to be able to take my abilities to heights that I never would have dreamed possible. I still have a hard time believing I can load up 515lb onto my back and squat.

I have never belonged to another community better than StrongLifts'. Everyone is very helpful and encouraging. It is nice to be able to return the favor. Keeping a training log inside the StrongLifts Community makes all the difference. You can go back and read what you have done. Even better other Members comment and cheer you on. Very powerful motivation!

I went from heart attack June 2008 to squatting 5x5 @ 470 pounds in just over 2 years. 1 year after starting Stronglifts 5x5. There is no program out there that could have possibly got me further along than Stronglifts 5x5 did.

-SL Member Norman aka "TheFinalSQL", 44, Gunter Texas USA.

“My advice for any 50+ y/o is to jump in the pool, the water's fine. I'm much stronger than I've ever been in my life.”



Chas Maloney aka “Buffalo”, New York USA. Self-employed. I started lifting on machines as that was the only equipment available. No particular goal in mind other than to "do something". With predictable results... a lot of "spun wheels" and wasted efforts.

Long term knee issues stemming from a torn ACL suffered while playing indoor soccer in the early 1980's. Due to any number of issues the injury was not adequately addressed for more than a year. After suffering through numerous, minor traumas, I finally found an orthopedist who correctly diagnosed the issue and had me undertake appropriate physical therapy and had me fitted for a brace. Reconstructive surgery was put off for as long as possible as the state of ACL repair was changing rapidly and the doc's opinion was that major advances in the field were coming, waiting would be advisable as the outcomes would be better. A few "scopes" later do to cartilage tears and it was decided to go ahead with the ACL reconstruction (1999).

Prior to the reconstruction I went thru at least three different bracing systems and always had issues with stability regardless of the amount of "machine training" I engaged in. Skiing was out as was soccer, any racquet sports were always touch and go. The surgery was a HUGE success, though I was a bad rehab patient trying to do too much too soon and ended up with wicked patellar tendonitis in both knees.

I found StrongLifts 5x5 though an economist's blog 6 months prior to joining the SL Community. I read and re-read everything Mehdi had posted and it seemed to make a great deal of sense. It certainly beat the hell out of what I had been doing previously.

I had no concerns in undertaking the program as I had gotten through the worst of my knee issues. I had been told to stay away from leg machines once I was through with PT so I was already doing a lot of single leg BW work. I never talked with my doc about SL5x5 or Squats. But I'm more than confident he'd be OK with the approach as he's the team doc for the Buffalo Bills (NFL - American Football).

I started 5x5 because I wanted to get stronger all over and put on some weight. Any benefits for my knee were secondary. I started with the empty bar as I had never used free weights. My progress with SL5x5 was far beyond anything I had experienced on my own or thru rehab on any number of levels physically, mentally, at home and at work.

Chas' Gains	03/2008	12/2009	Gains So far...
Age	53	55	
Body-weight (at 6'3")	175lbs	200lbs	+25lbs
Deadlift	90lbs	405lbs	+315lbs
Squat	45lbs	285lbs	+240lbs
Bench Press	45lbs	210lbs	+165lbs

I've never had my bodyfat measured but I haven't changed belt sizes. I'm denser, solid as it were. Shirt collars and boxer short legs are a bit tight, suit coats are definitely tighter in the shoulders. Friends have definitely noticed the changes whether at the gym, on the court or out casually and I really like the way I feel. And certainly, I'm much stronger than I've ever been in my life.

I stalled early on the Squat and got a little freaked out. I found a powerlifting coach in the area and went to her for a couple of sessions to nail down form and just talk through some technical things that I wasn't able work thru on my own. Squatting has never been an issue with my knees or hips once I nailed down the mechanics of a proper Squat. My knees feel fine and are no longer apt to swell after long encounters on the Squash court. And by the way, I haven't lost any foot speed. That was something that the coach stressed... how, even with the extra weight, I might be quicker off the mark due to all the leg and "core" work. My mechanics of movement are much improved on the court - lunging and recovering.

The StrongLifts community has been huge source of encouragement, accountability and information. SL Members have kept me going when I've gotten down on myself, offered therapy advice when I suffered a groin injury (non SL related by the way), acknowledged my attainment of personal goals, helped me set realistic goals, gave me partners to compete with (albeit electronically). Who are they: Holvoetn, kib, danmarmu, rere, mjh, mackanno. adamr, atypical1, mouse, bobu, myscat, baugmjk, groundskeeperwillie, guru, vlad, Mehdi and others whose logs I've lurked and or commented on over all these years.

My advice for any 50+ y/o out there is to jump in the pool, the water's fine. Put the ego aside and start with the empty bar, pay attention to mechanics, foam roll and get a masseuse. Don't be afraid of the de-load, plan time off as well. SL is a journey, not a destination...enjoy your time under the bar. Do not expect overnight results.If you have knee issues, make sure you have checked with your doc that you're good to go for any general physical activity and Squat past parallel.

The beauty of the SL5x5 program is that you don't have to re-create the wheel, Mehdi's done all the programming for you. Once you put in the hours and that means a year or two, you can look for alterations to StrongLifts 5x5, but until then just follow the program.

-SL Member Chas aka "Buffalo", 55, New York USA.

“I won the NY State Deadlifting Championship in the Masters 60-64, Raw Amateur division.”



I'm a self employed veterinarian with a daily commute of 55 miles each way plus I own and operate a 36 head horse farm with just my wife and I operating it. I don't have a lot of time leftover but I need to stay healthy and strong to continue what I'm doing. Unfortunately I like to eat and not healthy foods exclusively. You young guys who want to gain weight just get married. I gained 50 pounds in a year and have been trying to lose it ever since.

In the past I've tried cardiovascular and got bored. From Oct 07 thru Apr 08 I was doing super slow weightlifting but its not very rewarding to do exercises when failure is the endpoint of each set and I had not seen much results. A local trainer had an article in the paper saying to lose weight you needed to add muscle and if you weren't squatting your were wasting your time. So I googled squatting and found Mehdi's site.

I was excited about StrongLifts 5x5 because of it's simplicity and the fact it used squats which was what I was looking for. One of my reasons to start the program was to find a way to keep a healthy weight without giving up the foods I like. My only concern was whether or not I would stick with it. The first 2 weeks I read thru StrongLifts 5x5 and followed the program exactly as described.

Bob's Gains	2008	2009	2010	Gains..
Age	62y	63y	64y	
Body-weight (5'11")	196lb	185lb	180lb	-16lb
Waist	38"	34"	34"	-4"
Blood Pressure	136/89	117/76	105/75	
Deadlift	90lb	335lb	410lb	+320lb
Squat	45lb	310lb	345lb	+300lb
Bench	45lb	165lb	175lb	+125lb

All in all this has been a great experience and I'm not planning on giving it up any time soon. My spare tire is finally gone. StrongLifts 5x5 helped me become more aware of my body and to change my eating habits. I don't necessarily eat healthier food, just smaller portions. Now that my weight is down it seems it's going to be easier to maintain my new

body with weightlifting. I'm now actually needing to force myself to eat a little more just to keep from losing more weight.

I feel better physically and think I look better. I wouldn't feel self conscious in a bathing suit. Quite a few of my clients have remarked about how good I look. My wife isn't big on the whole exercise thing but I think she agrees I'm in better shape than I was 3 years ago.

Since I've started Stronglifts 5x5 I've seen a dramatic increase in strength and density of muscle. I feel better and have more energy than I have in years. No joint and leg pain, and instead of going up stairs slowly I tend to run up. In the morning there's no stiffness at all when I get out of bed.

In my case the most important thing in getting my blood pressure down was to get my weight down. The only time I had problems was when I was adding in HIIT and I got myself into a over-trained situation. My blood pressure and resting heart rate went up dramatically. About 3-4 weeks after stopping the cardio everything came back to normal. Weightlifting alone hasn't caused it to go up.

I stayed with 5x5 until July 2010 and then I've dropped down to 3x5. In deference to my age and ability to recover I switched to a schedule of two days rest between sessions some time ago. Although I consider myself still on the program I've tweaked it a little the last few months. When I increase my PR on squats and deadlift by 20# I take a week off and automatically deload by 20%. I'll probably continue that until I can no longer regularly produce new PRs. Last summer I won the NY State Deadlifting Championship in the Masters 60-64, Raw Amateur division.

Both the results and the positive reinforcement from comments from StrongLifts Members on my training log inside the StrongLifts Community kept me going. The log kept me honest, gave me reinforcement and allowed me to look back and see where things went wrong and right. Although I try to keep a physical log it keeps getting misplaced or I forget to update it. I probably wouldn't have succeeded without the online training log inside the StrongLifts Community.

Over all I'm extremely happy with what StrongLifts 5x5 has done for me. Although I'm still limited for time since I'm not retired I seem to want to find time to lift and look forward to every session. I recommend SL 5x5 to anyone my age even with no history of weight training. I had little experience and I think it was critical for me to follow the program exactly as the book describes it. Over complicating things is probably a big mistake.

Age shouldn't be a reason to not start SL. Starting at my age you are unlikely to be Mr America but you can't help getting stronger and that's never a bad thing. The big thing now in nursing homes is to get the residents to do resistance exercises so why not start before we go into a nursing home? Maybe you can prevent or at least delay the need for a nursing home by being proactive with our health.

On to year 3 and 1 year closer to Medicare!

-SL Member Bob aka "Bobu", 64yrs, New York, USA

“Getting my Deadlift from 135lbs to 545lbs is the best thing I ever did for my confidence. That, and gaining 85lbs in just over two years.”



In the summer of 2007, I remember going to the gym for the first time. I was weak and weighed a skinny 140 lbs... to be honest I really didn't like my life. It was that bad. I played a lot of lacrosse, and I was decent, but wasn't getting any better. I had some friends, but not many. I had absolutely no confidence, I couldn't really talk to people, I was afraid. I was quiet and got picked on quite a bit that first year of high school.

I got pissed off and was really hitting the weights hard for 6 to 8 months doing bodybuilding routines (stuff out of magazines, no real structure to my workouts). That got me absolutely nowhere. I gained 10lbs, that's it. I was 14 years old, 5'10", 150lbs. No Squatting or Deadlifting! I did a lot of curls and crap like that, but I was even weak at that too.

In the early summer of 2008 I came across Stronglifts. From then on, this website has had a profound impact on many areas of my life. It wasn't so easy at the start though: my form sucked, I stalled a lot, but I slowly got stronger and put on weight. For the start of school that year in September of 2008 I think I weighed 170 lbs, so I put on about 20lbs in a couple months after starting Stronglift's 5x5. I realized that maybe there was something to this. When I focused on just gaining strength, muscle started building!

Then I was at the gym one day in the summer when I saw a guy moving some big weight around and asked if he was a powerlifter. He said yes, so I asked him a few questions, and said that I thought it would be cool to compete one day. A few weeks later I met another strong guy at the gym who asked me why I was training. That really made me think. I was currently on the provincial team for lacrosse (strength training hugely improved my game!), I was good, but I didn't really like lacrosse anymore. I liked pushing weight. So when he asked me that question I replied that I wanted to compete in powerlifting one day.

Fast forward to September 2010, I weigh a pretty ripped 220lbs, 17 years old, 6'0", and people comment all the time on my size and strength. I also Squatted a raw 501lbs, Benched 275lbs and Deadlifted 513lbs in competition. I'm currently aiming to win the

Canadian National Powerlifting Championships in the 110kg class in April 2011.

Jake's Gains	Summer 2008	October 2010	Gains so far...
Age	15y	17y	
Height	5'10"	6'0"	
Body-weight	150lbs	225lbs	+75lbs
Deadlift	135lbs	545lbs	+410lbs
Squat	135lbs	501lbs	+366lbs
Bench Press	125lbs	305lbs	+180lbs

To sum it up: it's been long and hard to get to the point I'm at now, but a whole lot of fun. I started out as a weak and insecure boy who just wanted to put on muscle and gain confidence. I did bodybuilding routines that did nothing for me. When I stumbled across Stronglifts, I didn't think it would do anything for me. But I read every article on the site, and built up enough trust in Mehdi to try out his program.

Fast forward two years after starting Stronglift 5x5 and I'm a competitive powerlifter weighing nearly 85lbs more than when I started. I don't consider myself strong or big; however at 225lbs and 6', I'm larger than most of my peers at 17 years old. In just over two years I brought my Squat from 135 lbs to 501lbs, bench from 150 lbs to 305lbs, and Deadlift from 135 lbs to 545lbs. I also strict Press 225lbs.

Almost more importantly, I'm confident and no longer have problems talking to people, or socializing. Don't get me wrong I'm not the most social guy around, that takes time, but I'm far better than before. I also never get picked on because... well, I think most people know better not to anymore. I swear getting my Deadlift up to 545lbs is the best thing I ever did for my confidence. That, and gaining 85 lbs in just over two years.

Starting to strength train sucks, I know. You walk in there without much knowledge on technique, you're intimidated by the weights. But when you do something enough, you start to enjoy it. The results become addicting, you start enjoying your time in the gym, and you become smarter with your training. Before you know it, you're building slabs of muscles onto your body and you start to feel more confident.

You might feel at some point that you're better off just going to the gym to isolate your muscles, and work on the so-called "beach muscles" (chest, biceps, abs) but I'll tell you this: if you build up solid legs, a solid back and shoulders (the important stuff), you'll put on muscle a lot faster. You need a good base to work with, know what I mean?

Understand that it's not a quick process! Everyone wants to hear "6 weeks to a better body." Guess what? It doesn't work guys. I spent years getting to the point I'm at now and I don't yet consider myself strong or big. Keep working hard and you'll get where you want.

-SL Member Jake aka "JakeMcMillan", 17, BC Canada.

“I am a long, long way from when I was 126lb this time last year. I can’t actually believe I was that light.”



I am Scottish and study marine engineering in Glasgow, I am an engineering Cadet in the merchant navy. I got a set of free weights for Christmas when I was about 16, messed around with it for a few months but didn't eat properly or follow a program and didn't really see much gains so I gave it up and let my weights gather dust in the shed.

When I turned 18 in march 2009 I went for a medical exam just before going to sea, the usual eye test, urine test etc. The doctor told me I was 9 stone (126lb) but he didn't say anything about it, that I should gain weight or anything so I didn't care.

Then my parents started commenting on how skinny I looked. This put me in a really bad mood a lot of the time. Then girls started saying the same, and so did my friend's parents. So I thought f*ck it I'm going to put weight on and start lifting.

There wasn't much of a gym while I was at sea and barely knew body weight exercises so I put it off until I came back. I reached 10.5 stone (147lbs) around December 2009 and basically plateaued. I couldn't pack on any more weight and was getting frustrated.

Up until this point I had been doing a 4-5 day bodybuilding split, and although I used a barbell I was doing isolation exercises such as bicep curls, forearm curls, shoulder flies, pec flies, dumbbell raises, calf raises, barely ever squatted, etc. I trained alone in my flat. I increased the weight by 5lbs every 6 weeks or so. I didn't eat properly even though I thought I did. I ate porridge oats in the morning, a sandwich for lunch and a pizza for dinner and a protein shake after workouts.

At the start of March 2010 I met an old mate who was into lifting (in one year he went from 10 stone and skinny to 14 stone and lean and muscular) and he told me about Stronglifts 5x5 and GOMAD. Within 2 weeks I got up to 11 stone. Bench Press went from 60kg to 75kg and Deadlift from 80kg to 100kg. In April 2010 I reached 11.5 stone (160.5lbs) and I was so happy to have made that much progress. I set myself the target of getting to 12 stone before June 2010.

Kurt's Gains	March 2009 (pre-training)	March 2010 (bb routines)	June 2010 (3 months SL5x5)	Gains so far...
Age	18y	19y	19y	
Height	5'9.5"	5'9.5"	5'9.5"	
Body-weight	126lbs	145lbs	165.5lbs	39,5lbs
Deadlift	/	80kg	115kg	
Squat	25kg	60kg	105kg	+80kg
Bench Press	25kg	60kg	85kg	+60kg

I feel better. I feel stronger, bigger, much more confident, brave, and happier. It seems stupid now - but when I was still pretty skinny I hated going into supplement shops to buy big tubs of whey protein, I thought they would see me with it and laugh. I used to hide the tubs of whey protein in my house in case my friends seen it and thought 'you work out?', really?'. Now they don't even have to ask, they can see it.

Guys at college who have been at the gym awhile now talk to me about weightlifting. People I haven't seen in months say I look different. Mostly I get commented on my back or neck being thicker - thanks to Squats and Deadlifts. My jeans also no longer fit, the denim around my thighs and waist tightens when I walk - thanks to Squats. I am a long, long way from when I was 126lb this time last year. I can't actually believe I was that light.

My girlfriend didn't want me to get bigger than 12 stone, she isn't really into the big muscular look. Since I reached my target weight of 12 stone she is happy for me to continue as long as I am happy, but I don't want to be massive. I think 180-185 would be my ideal weight, she's fine with that now. In fact, some of her male friends have asked my advice on bulking up since they saw my results.

I love the SL Community and how supportive and like-minded everybody is. You can talk to guys with similar goals and motivate each other. I should thank SL Member KlimmilKSQ here, he helped me a lot when I needed a question answered or just somebody to talk about lifting with. So thanks for all your help so far, even if I haven't spoken to you, I've probably been reading your stories and it makes all the difference to know I'm not alone.

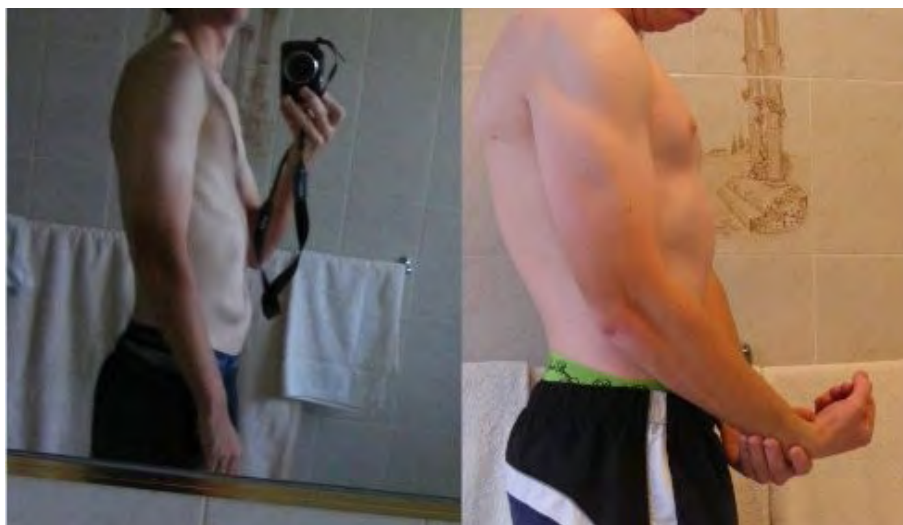
If you are considering StrongLifts 5x5 but are unsure of the benefits, trust me. Compound lifts are far superior to isolation exercises because – more muscles used, less muscle imbalance, increased functional everyday strength, effective mass gainer, safer, strengthens joints. This programme has been proven to work by myself and many others.

Join the Stronglifts Community and make a training log – other SL Members can give you feedback and you can track your own strength progress. See what works and see what needs improvement by reading your own log.

I hope my story has inspired some people and proven that it can be done! Thank you Mehdi, for the great programme and friendly environment. Thanks to the rest of the Stronglifts Community, for all their support.

- SL Member Kurt aka "Fromhell", 19, Scotland.

“After following Stronglifts 5x5 I'm bigger than pretty much all of my friends who go the gym”



I'm Scott. I'm 18 years old, and studying Information Technology full time at college in Perth, Western Australia. Before starting Stronglifts 5x5 I was extremely skinny although at the time I just accepted my physique. I thought you were either born big or you weren't.

During this time I was unhappy with my appearance and had a lack of confidence in everyday life due to this, I lacked confidence talking to people, rarely talked to women and would never approach girls. I had no real interest in sport, having never really played much besides a few years of Soccer as a child.

Towards the end of high school many of my friends joined the gym, and upon seeing their results I decided if they could achieve such things so could I! Before I discovered SL5x5 I was one of those kids in the gym that didn't have a clue what they were doing. My routine consisted simply of different variations of bicep curls in the hope that I would get big from performing such exercises. I did that because that's what I saw most people doing/talking about: big guns = bicep curls! My routine never had a consistent layout like Stronglifts 5x5. I was training hard but wasn't seeing the results I hoped for, I had no gains at all.

I stumbled upon Mehdi's website while surfing in order to find a new workout routine. I read some success stories and training logs from StrongLifts Members. After reading Mehdi's book I decided SL5x5 was the routine for me. It seemed to be so simple yet effective! All of my queries were answered within the book, and those questions which I did have were promptly answered by Members inside the StrongLifts Community.

Scott's Gains	February 2010	July 2010	Gains so far...
Age	17y	18y	
Body-weight (6'1")	65kg	80kg	+15kg
Arms	11.5"	14"	+2.5"
Deadlift	35kg	90kg	+55kg
Squat	25kg	80kg	+55kg
Bench Press	25kg	70kg	+45kg

Today I feel more confident in every day life and a lot more disciplined, not just in the gym but in my studies and all other aspects of my life. Prior to training when I was skinny I was too embarrassed and shy to talk to people, especially women. Today I find I'm a lot better at this, I'm having a lot more conversations and have a beautiful girlfriend too. Before I found concentrating at college hard - but after a tough gym session in the morning I feel a lot better and therefore am able to focus more and excel at my studies!

People often comment "wow you've bulked up!" or "have you started working out, you look a lot different" (although it's winter so it's not as noticeable but I'm looking forward to summer). After following Stronglifts 5x5 and GOMAD I'm bigger than pretty much all of my friends who go to the gym. It was not until they asked what I was doing as my size began to rapidly increase that they found out compound lifts and milk were far more effective.

When putting on the 15KG via ½ GOMAD (added 2L of full cream milk a day to my diet) I trained harder than I ever had before in order to minimize fat gains - I was successful at this as the size of my waist did not change AT ALL (still 32" as when I started). So a decent amount of the 15kg I gained was muscle. I gained roughly 6KG in the first month with ½ GOMAD and had minimal fat gains.

At first I found the form of the exercises to be my biggest concern - as injuring myself would be the last thing I wanted to do. Although after posting form check videos in the SL Community I was able to perfect my technique. From then on the weight I was lifting continued to increase... I did injure myself a couple of times - this was due to poor deadlift form. When you're starting out all you want to do is lift more and more and more.

I would recommend you start light and perfect your form before you stack on the plates - this is essential. If you use bad form like I initially did you will not see the gains you are hoping for and run the risk of severely injuring yourself. During one point of my training I was not happy with my Squat form (not going deep enough) so I reduced the weight and concentrated on hitting parallel. I don't regret doing this as now I lift more than I was then and with much better form too!

I think everybody that undertakes SL5X5 should keep a training log - it's a great tool in order to track your progress, as well as motivate you when you look back at how much stronger you have become over the last week / month / year. The Stronglifts Community helped me to reach my goals by providing answers to my questions when I was starting out, motivation looking at other Members logs and eventually motivation when Members were commenting on my before/after progress pictures and the lifts in my 5X5 log.

Before you question the effectiveness of SL5X5 and GOMAD I highly recommend you give it a go, I believe I'm living proof that the routine is solid and guaranteed to give you the results you want, whether that be to keep fit, lose weight or get big (like me). Although remember: the routine is only one part on the journey to your goals - lots of rest and a clean diet is essential if you wish to see the gains you desire. Lift big, eat big, rest big and you'll get BIG.

-SL Member Scott aka "sd0707", 18, Perth, Australia.

“Reg Park wasn’t BSing anyone”



About 1 year and 7 months ago (in that pic), I weighed around 190lbs at 6’3”. This was after dieting down from 240 pounds of all fat. Back then, I didn’t know much about lifting and dieting for maximum results. I was eating low calories, low fat, 4-5 days a week cardio, 5 day split. And I thought I was muscular.

Until one day in the summer of 08 one of my friends (who was pretty big and strong) found out I was giving lifting advice, and he told me I am the last person to be giving that advice because I was so skinny. Confused, I realized I was scrawny and decided to bulk up. I knew about StrongLifts, and I trusted it, but I didn’t follow SL5x5 due to bodybuilder ADD.

I used all sorts of weird workouts that I tried to base off of StrongLifts 5×5. I used the 7 main exercises, but with things like Push day, pull day, legs day, hypertrophy rep ranges (5-7 reps). I also tried doing everything 3x a week. It didn’t take long for my lower back to go crazy in pain. I dropped Deadlifts for a while and did Front Squats as my lower body exercise. I did a lot of different routines, always switching it up, never giving a routine even a whole 3 months. Big mistake, if I could go back in time, I would not reinvent the wheel.

Nevertheless, I bulked up some good mass. After all, other than beginner gains, I did control the volume and used only big compounds. I shot up back to 240 in 7 months or so.

I stopped eating a lot so my weight wouldn’t go higher, as I put on a little bit too much fat. From there, it was hell. I got stuck doing the bodybuilding stuff I wasn’t ready for. I inflated a LITTLE, and got shapelier, but I got weaker, in EVERYTHING...I was stuck in this cycle for months... Bad training, not enough food... Then I got the stomach flu, and I dropped to 225. That was the last straw.

About 5 months ago, I decided it was time to actually do something like Stronglifts 5×5 and eat big to gain back my weight and then some, the way it was meant to be done. I finally began EATING 4000-5000 calories a day. I’m drinking more milk lately, 6 cups a day on training days, 2-3 on off days.

It was mentally tough, but I stuck to it. Man, I am glad I smartened up early on (I am still 19). Anyway, it STILL wasn't StrongLifts 5×5 so I plateaued. Then I just did the damn routine itself. It was a good decision.

The results so far? It is like my second experience of beginner gains.

- My strength is increasing progressively
- My muscles are thickening up
- I finally have side and rear delts
- Traps are looking good
- Chest and arms bigger and harder
- My abdominals are big
- And I love my “strongman gut”

I learned how to use my posterior chain in Squats and Deadlifts. Posture is fixing itself. I am stretching more often to prevent my lower back rounding. I am counting calories to support my progress as needed.

I am 240lbs again, but leaner since the last time I was 240lbs. I believe I am 6'4" now too. Overall current goal is to be 240lbs at a leaner weight. With some proper effort and planning I hope to reach this goal within a year or 2.

5×5 works, compounds work, isos are not even close to being as important, a base strength is important and perfect for relatively weak lifters to gain strength and mass. Making a weird routine based off this will probably yield better results than what most experts in the gym are doing. But following a proven routine focused on linear progression is tough to beat.

I was really underestimating StrongLifts 5x5. Just because it says build up you base strength doesn't mean you'll get strong but not big. By the time the weights are too heavy for adding weight every workout, if you ate enough, you'll be significantly bigger (Reg Park wasn't BSing anyone) and most probably more than satisfied with it. I love the results so far and can't wait to see how strong and big I get before advancing from SL.

-SL Member “Killerdude”, 19, Los Angeles, USA.

“ In 3 months I went from a guy who had to drag himself into the gym every day to a guy looking to compete in Powerlifting”

My name's Wei, I'm currently residing in Ottawa, Ontario. I am 17, and attending my last year of high school. I am of Asian origin, as can probably be determined by my first name. Many people think that Asians are all genetically skinny, and use this as an excuse. However I gained all following about half a GOMAD. The ability to gain weight at a novice stage is limited only by the dedication of the trainee.

I used to be an avid basketball player since the age of 8 and started to really get into lifting in the summer of 2009. A small reason was to perform better at basketball, as I was always a skinny/scrawny kid being pushed around. However the main reason was self-esteem, I really got sick of always being called the skinny kid, or being made fun of whenever I loaded a barbell because it was not as much. One day I maxed out the calf machine, and when some kid in the change room overheard me saying I maxed out the machine, he said something along the lines of “Which machine, the zero machine?” It was comments like that which were said frequently that at first brought me down, however I eventually decided to channel it into training energy.

Unfortunately I started out with a bodybuilding program I got from a guy I met at the gym who was quite big (which influenced his advice a lot). It was basically chest every day, with alternating shoulders and back every other day. I trained like that for around 4 months, and made extremely little gains. My bench went up only went up 20 pounds over that time, and that was the lift I had gained the most on. I also plateaued on practically every lift, and for the last 2 months I did the same weight for each exercise.

I then started talking to my friend, who had previously been my personal trainer. He actually took the time to sit down with me and discuss training, and he made me realize that it was the big compound movements that were key to strength gaining. He ended up giving me a decent push/pull/legs routine, however there was no log or planning to it, I would just end up going to the gym and putting on whatever I felt like, which would usually be the same weight as a previous workout.

Fortunately I was doing some online reading regarding squat form and by chance came upon the SL website. I read the program and it sounded really good, what was great was that the idea of “progressive loading” is very simple and really clicked. I doubted that only 3x a week workouts would work, though. However I lurked the forum a bit and came upon a lot of people, such as SL Member MikeD (page 200), that had made great progress using it, and decided it was definitely worth a shot.

I gave SL5x5 a shot for about 3 weeks, and actually made good gains with it. My 5RM Squat had already gone up 30lbs, I was on the verge on breaking my year 8 month old bench plateau, and my deadlift 5RM was up 50lbs. Unfortunately due to my school hours and commute home, I found that I was often not finishing SL5x5 workouts. I ended up following one of Mehdi's suggestions in the e-book, which was dropping some assistance exercises and going from 5x5 to 3x5 to keep workouts shorter. It worked out well for me, I was making good linear progression and finishing all my workouts.

Wei' sGains	March 8, 2010	June 29, 2010	Gains so far...
Age	17y	17y	
Height	5'9"	5'10"	+1"
Body-weight	150lbs	165lbs	+15lbs
Body-fat	12%	13%	+1%
Deadlift	225lbs	452lbs	+227lbs
Squat	205lbs	320lbs	+115lbs
Bench Press	135lbs	185lbs	+50lbs

Focused weight training has become a passion for me, I love everything about it and in the span of 3 months I went from a guy who had to drag himself into the gym every day to a guy looking to compete in Powerlifting in the near future. The gym became an escape for me, and whenever I had problems or was pissed off, I could crank out a heavy workout and feel better immediately. I used to have low self-esteem, however now I find it easier to accept who I am and be more open with even random people, which has really helped me make new friends. It helped that people at my gym are very liberal with compliments, not necessarily on my size but on how much I'm lifting, even if it isn't even close to what a lot of them are lifting. Though I got into weightlifting for carry over to basketball, I find that I love weightlifting more right now, and only play basketball as a spare time hobby. Weightlifting has carried over to everything else in my life though, and I find everything else in life a lot easier than a set of heavy back squats.

StrongLifts has helped a lot by giving me a place to write a log, something I believe to be the most crucial parts of training. A log allows someone to look back upon past training, especially during times of lacking motivation, to really see that progress has indeed happened, as well as seeing what has worked and what hasn't, so they can replicate success. Even though I do not follow the SL template, I still keep a log here to keep my own progress, as well as to receive feedback from other people. I would most definitely recommend a log to someone else, for all of the above reasons. They are, in my opinion, a necessary part of someone's training.

I was skeptical when I first read about the StrongLifts 5x5 program, because 3x a week with 5 exercises a workout does not seem to be specific enough. However me and people like me have achieved big results with SL or similar programs. It works, all you have to do is put aside any doubts and try it for yourself. There is no cost to trying a program, and the least you can do after reading my story is to give it a shot yourself for 3 months. If you find your not making progress (Most likely do to "YNDTP" syndrome) then you can drop it and go back to whatever program you were previously doing.

-SL Member Wei aka "WYS", 17, Ontario, Canada.

“I don't train for the compliments ... but they are nice”



I'm Scott O'Neill from Aberdeen, Scotland. I'm 19 and just finished my 2nd year studying Philosophy at Aberdeen uni. I have an awesome girlfriend called Fiona, great friends, as well as a very supportive family.

For the past 4 years I have practiced parkour since a friend showed me a video. Through this I developed an interest in strength and conditioning. I got a pullup bar, an ab-wheel and dumbbells. I worked up to a set of 20 dead hang pullups, could do 3 or 4 pistols and was able to hold the front lever for 3-6 seconds. I also ran sprints and did circuit training involving burpees. By June 2009 I had tried a variety of sports - looking for one that would have a carryover to Parkour - but none really held my attention.

I was browsing the net and saw people discussing weights. Up until this point I was an advocate of body-weight only training because I believed weights would make you big, slow, and inflexible. This belief came from a lot of lies being posted on various forums as well as things people said. But after reading an article about why athletes can benefit from weights I reconsidered my views. I went on a crazed search of the internet learning as much as I could and saw people talking about StrongLifts on multiple sites.

After finding several strength training programs and comparing them I decided to go with StrongLifts 5x5. Why? Well for a few reasons:

1. The site was easy to navigate.
2. It explained WHY it did things.
3. The information was in a easy to understand format.
4. Had lots of success stories which motivated me to try it.
5. It straight away said you need to bust your a** to get results.

I was a little worried that I was going to lose all the body weight strength skills I had developed but decided I would give it a shot and see how I felt after a month. After all, I wouldn't lose much strength in the month if it didn't work.

So I decided to give StrongLifts 5x5 a shot in September 2009. I joined my uni gym, started with just the bar to get a feel for technique, and went for a month before the gym closed. The iron bug had got me and it would be 3 months till I got to satisfy it. The new gym took ages to open so I searched for one that was accessible and not expensive. I didn't find any that filled my criteria.

3 months later and it's Christmas time. Fiona - I told you she was awesome - and my folks got me 165kg of weights, a 20kg Olympic Barbell, and spotter catchers. I was a very, very happy guy. This is the best present I've ever had. It has had such a positive effect on my life. I also got a bench but there were problems delivering it which meant it took until late March 2010 before I got it.

I thought I was strong but was humbled on Christmas day. As I had my month of experience I wanted to test my maxes on everything. Not the most sensible thing to do when I hadn't touched a barbell in 3 months but I was curious.

After 3 months I changed from 5x5 to 3x5. For the second 3 months I was doing Parkour almost every Saturday. In June 2010 I dropped to 2 strength workouts a week and added conditioning – sprints, circuit training - 3 days a week.

Scott's Gains	March 2010	July 2010	Gains so far...
Age	19y	19y	
Body-weight (6'2")	72kg	77kg	+5kg
Deadlift	110kg	185kg	+75kg
Squat	55kg	110kg	+55kg
Bench Press	/	90kg	+90kg
Overhead Press	45kg	75kg	+30kg

I managed to pull 185kg in 6 months. I did this by thinking, no, KNOWING that I could it with 100% certainty. This is one of the most important things I developed though lifting: ridiculous self-belief. If I want something I WILL achieve it. Never doubt yourself.

The dedication that consistently hitting the weights builds as well as the willpower needed to finish heavy sets has carried over into my everyday life. I feel way more confident in everything I do. When you know you're throwing around weights heavier than the average person you start to feel like a super hero. Kinda hard to be daunted by anything when you have this feeling. The feeling of power you get when you break a PR is unbeatable. At these points I feel like a warrior and know I can do anything I want.

I got multiple compliments since I started lifting. The other day when I was training parkour multiple people said I was 'too strong'. This makes me feel great because these guys can do some crazy things. Fiona has a topless pic of me which her brother saw. He said *"Scott has abs of steel, he looks like a wrestler"*. I don't train for the compliments but they are nice :) I can carry/move things around easily that other people struggle with. It's also good fun that when playing sports with my mates, I can cheat and easily pick them up now.

One problem is clothes. Ok, you got me, so I kinda love it. I've ripped 2 pairs of jeans cos my legs and ass have grown. I have went up a shirt size from medium to large. Tops that used to be baggy are now fitted. I've had to throw out a lot of clothes.

And of course Fiona loves it - I'm stronger, fitter, and gained muscle. Only problem is she keeps trying to snap photos of me now when she isn't grabbing my bum. Ok, once again it's not really a problem.

With regards to Parkour my added strength has launched me to new levels, I'm now doing things that people suggest jokingly when we are out. I was hanging from a bar and someone suggested a explosive pullup to the higher bar. I did it and he told me "Wow, I was only joking" . Developing my maximal strength has helped my explosive power. I have a much high vertical, and a larger broad jump – largest within the group of people I train with. I can rep strict muscleups - had to kip before. My front lever has gone up without training it (almost 10 seconds now). Pistols are easy now, I could get 10-15 fresh. I also knocked out 12 strict deadhang pullups the other day after a intense session (set my deadlift PR). Could easily get more if fresh.

Basically the strength I've got from lifting has had awesome carryover to BW strength. For me I think it's important to keep several body-weight exercises in use as they seem to fine tune my strength and make it super applicable to Parkour. I now recommend the addition of heavy compounds to everyone I train with. When they ask what I mean I give a brief explanation and point them to Stronglifts. If however they say that lifting will make them bulky, slow, or unflexible I slap them and give them such a long spiel that they will never again ask that question in case they receive another equally long talk.

Although I don't post a lot I do check the StrongLifts Community fairly often and everyone has helped me push myself. Reading about everyone on there working to make it happen is seriously motivational. Thanks everyone. It's good talking about training with people who actually train. SL Members share the same mindset and have had similar experiences. Very few of my friends in real life get 'it'. I can talk about training with Fiona - which is great, she knows a lot about strength and fitness now :) - but not in the same way as with people who train.

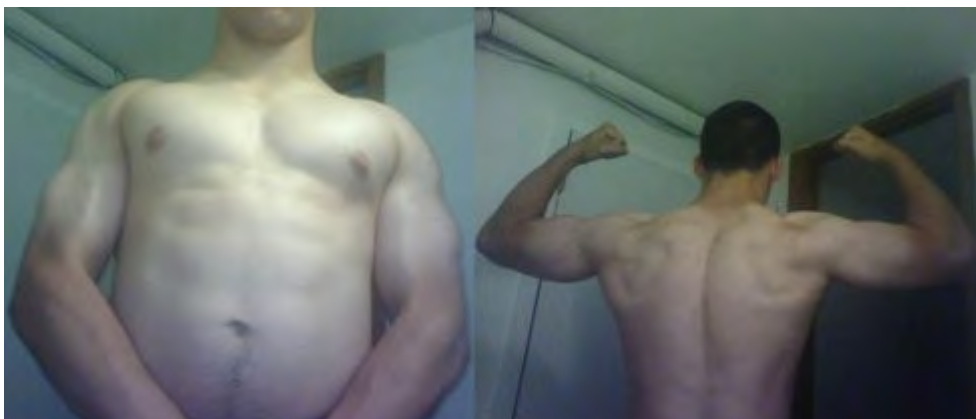
For someone who doesn't train my post might come off as elitist or me bragging but SL Members who have been through this and know how great it feels know that I'm just another guy who is pleased with what he has achieved. Stick with the SL5X5 program for at least 4 months. This will give you a chance to learn the movements and experience some awesome strength gains. If you still don't want to do the program then at least use a program that focuses on the basic compound lifts - Squat, deadlift, OHP, Bench. Consistency is more important than anything else. There is no quick fix, you have to do the work to get stronger. If you work hard the results will come.

After having such a great fun lifting I'm planning on entering a powerlifting competition at the end of the year. After I see how I stand against the other guys in my weight class I will then be going and training like mad till I deem myself ready to enter and win.

Mehdi thanks for making such an easy to follow program, writing the articles, and keeping the site up.

-SL Member Scott O'Neill aka "ScottON", 19, Aberdeen, Scotland.

“I found something to define myself with, something I can't say I had in any meaningful way before.”



My name's Mike, I'm 19, I live in NY and I have a retail job (like most jobs people get while going to school). I started training when I was 14, doing pull ups on a bar my dad had set up. I became obsessive with them and did too much probably, working up to around 100 a day (5 every 3 minutes for an hour, strict rest), some days 140. It's amusing to think back at that because my training now reflects the same need for excess, but I'll get to that.

A big thing for me was actually in gym class...I never was good or cared much about sports but any feats of strength there were I was eager to perform. For years I couldn't climb a foot up the rope, not even with my legs, and this pissed me off. And anyone who could do it had a certain esteem about them, because it wasn't easy. After following the obsessive pull up regimen, in 8th grade we did the rope test again. Not only was I the only person who climbed it in my class, but I did it was just my arms, with ease. The clear relation between work and results got in my head and never left.

So I used anything I had; which sadly was my sister's 10lb e-z curl bar that had around 85lbs of weight on them. I curled (duh), I overhead pressed (and I guess I cleaned it too), and I squatted up on my toes (but went all the way down at least, haha). I dabbled with wrestling and kickboxing, but it was always a relief to come back to the weights.

I finally got a bench and squat stands when I was around 16, and got roped into a lot of BB-ing stuff. Drop sets, forced reps, higher volume, whatever. Made my arms big, but it was unfulfilling. The rope-climb feeling just wasn't there, and a lot of times I felt I was dragging into the gym to just "get work done" and not be "fat" or something.

Eventually I got on a program that I think was some form of SL Intermediate, it consisted of the squat, bench and row 3x a week. The strength gains were addictive. My squat hovered a little over the 200 mark, my bench around 165, and I think my row wasn't even 135.

After this there was a lull where I got into the kickboxing and such, but when I finally got out of it and also stopped wrestling (I was around 17) I went back to the weights looking for something else. I knew this was the only thing I liked.

I found Stronglifts through my sister actually, downloaded the book, read it, and went at it. I wasn't concerned about the Squat volume or sets across, in fact I had wished the program

I had done before was like that. I like doing more rather than less.

Mike's Gains	Dec 2008 (Start SL5x5)	May 2009 (End SL5x5)	July 2010 (Current)	Gains
Age	17y	18y	19y	
Body-weight (5'8")	150lb	165lb	165lb	+15lb
Deadlift	200lb	405lb	450lb	+250lb
Squat	200lb	275lbs	365lb	+165lb
Bench Press	165lb	205lb	235lb	+70lb

I competed in a powerlifting meet on on June 13th 2010 in New Jersey , where I hit a 350 squat, 225 bench (missed 240 on a technicality) and a 450 deadlift in the 165lbs weight class. I just squatted 365 in training and plan to hit 405 in my next meet in November.



I was always a skinny so my waist was always 30-32 inches. I gained about 15lbs purely by accident, and now hover comfortably around 165, but my body comp is changing still. BF% looks around 10% or less w/ visible abs.

All I can say is after finding Stronglifts, which I feel was the lynchpin to my whole entry into this, I feel great. Strong, feeling aware of where I can push my limits. I feel as if I found something to define myself with, something I can't say I had in any meaningful way before.

What do people say? I've always had the support of friends/family, making me believe this was a "good thing" I was doing. People mostly compliment my strength, because being a light weight guy you don't exactly cast a shadow over everyone with your mass, haha. If I had eaten more I'd be pretty damn big right now, but I never had a big appetite and I had my eye on powerlifting for awhile so I kept my weight similar. I'm leaner and dense as hell, and the most useful guy most places I go when things need to be moved around (working with mostly women/girls highlights this, haha).

I also feel like my character is stronger, and that I can deal with people more easily because of a greater sense of self worth. As for looks, pretty much any clothing looks good on me, aside from the dress shirts that are too damn small for my neck. The looks thing

never made me much more confident, it was just something I feel like I didn't worry about anymore. The accomplishment of getting stronger carried over much more to my confidence out in the world.

The StrongLifts Community thing was huge, connecting with like minded people (even powerlifters) was big for me, and getting more encouragement was great. This business of strength can get a bit lonely, especially in a commercial gym where nearly NO ONE is doing what you're doing, so it helps.

Seeing the strong people and other powerlifters-in-the-making here; jakemcmillan, muddy, Jim Slade, atypical, strong4rugby, wellhairedbeast, among many others who always give support keeps me hungry to do better. Sorry to not name all but to anyone posting in my training log, it means a lot to me so thank you.

For any kid looking at SL or heavy compound lift work in general, and feels a bit skeptical...don't be. This is the basis for becoming a big, strong, useful human being. You won't overtrain from the work. Remember how I said I liked excess? Not only did I squat 3 times a week and deadlifted, benched, and pressed heavy, but I put ALL of them in the se workout 3x a week for a good 3 months before I started burning out. Yes, I went against the program and didn't alternate the lifts, and I still saw great progress, though halfway through the program I began doing it as written. If you're smart about it and actually do it as written, you'll probably do better, and not have the overuse injuries I accrued.

So the takeaway: get stronger, lift heavy, use barbells, be CONSISTENT, and work very hard. It wouldn't hurt if you found a reason to do so that inspires you, either. One ought to enjoy the process of becoming strong and useful.

To everyone who read this and just started lifting, good luck! Aim high but keep your head down and work, and you'll be seriously wrecking it if you give it time.

-SL Member Mike aka "MikeD", 19, NY USA.

“My Squat, Deadlift and total were all provincial records in the sub junior category”



My name is Myles, and I go by Rugger inside the SL Community. I'm 20 years old, I live in British Columbia, Canada, and am currently a student.

As my user name might suggest, I am a rugby player, although I haven't played competitively in about a year. When I began the StrongLifts 5x5 program in November 2007, it was because I wanted to develop the physical tools I needed to excel at rugby, I wanted to get bigger and stronger so I could kick ass on the field. I had lifted weights for a while, but spent most of my time on machines, and never had a real program.

I stumbled upon StrongLifts.com in August 2007, while doing research towards developing an appropriate strength training program, and absolutely loved it. It was put together in a way that was easy to understand, clearly wasn't trying to scam me, and contained a wealth of information just below the surface in the form of daily blog postings.

What I liked was that everything Mehdi was saying, and everything about the program, corresponded with a lot of the other information I was researching independently. After reading through the main blog posts, everything started making a lot of sense to me, so I decided to commit to the SL5x5 program and see what would happen.

When I started lifting, I had a disproportionately strong lower body, which I attribute to good leverages, good genetics, and lots and lots hill sprints over the years.

Myles' Gains	November 2007	March 2008	November 2008
Age	17y	17y	18y
Body-weight (6'0")	159lbs	177lbs	180lbs
Squat	185	275	434.5lbs
Deadlift	225	305	506lbs
Bench Press	105	145	203.5lbs

On November 23, 2008, at the BCPA 2008 Fall Classic, I competed for the first time. My

squat, deadlift, and total were all BC provincial records in the sub junior category.

- Squat 197,5kg
- Deadlift 230kg
- Bench Press 92,5kg
- Total: 1152lbs at 174lbs bodyweight

The difference in my body after my first six months was night and day. I went from a skinny kid with a bit of a gut, to looking like an adult male in good physical condition. In a relatively short period of time I had acquired a broad back and shoulder, a wide chest, tree trunk legs, an ass, and a little bit of female attention.

The whole process of transforming myself physically changed me mentally as well, I became generally more confident and outgoing, and began to see the value of putting consistent effort towards a goal.

My athletic performance also increased greatly, I had gained around 20lbs, a lot of which was muscle, but my speed had actually increased. On the rugby field, whenever I went into a tackle or hit a ruck, I could actually feel people move as they absorbed my momentum, instead of just bouncing off of them.

In the entire first season of rugby I played after strength training, I didn't sustain a single injury which prevented me from practicing or playing, in contrast to being an injury prone wreck in previous years. I always had issues with my lower back and knees, but after getting my deadlift and squat strong, they went away completely.

After gaining 20lbs and more than doubling my strength I feel like a competitor instead of just a recreational athlete, I've developed a passion for physical fitness, and look forward to a lifetime of sports and training.

Throughout this whole process I received a tremendous amount of support from the Stronglifts Community, having kept a training log almost as long as I had been lifting. Keeping a log is an absolute necessity for anyone serious about training, and doing so on the SL forum allows you to interact with other Member who have similar goals, and may have encountered some of the same challenges you are facing. Competing with others online, and posting your best lifts in the PR thread is also a great way to stay motivated.

To anyone who is considering starting Stronglifts 5x5, who has never strength trained with a proper program before, who is maybe hung up on some of the details, I have one thing to say: just frigging do it. SL5x5 is not the perfect program, because there is no perfect program. However, the BEST program will always be the one that gets you in gym, that you can follow with consistency.

Just do it, it's only three hours a week, which I'm sure you can make room for. Commit to following the program for three months, then make up your mind. If you aren't convinced that training compound movements with heavy barbells is the way to go, you can always do something else.

Best of luck with your training,

-StrongLifts Member Myles aka "Rugger", 20, BC, Canada.

“My son was selected for county rugby trials 6 months after being rejected. I put this down to SL5x5. Thank you.”



I would like to start this off by saying a massive thank you to Mehdi and the StrongLifts Community who have helped enormously. I am writing this to tell you the success my son has had on the Stronglifts 5x5 system. My son is an ambitious rugby player and has played in England since he was 9 years old. He was always blessed with the things that you can't teach – courage, aggression and a strong competitive spirit.

He continued to increase his skills and was selected for County trials at age 12/13. The trials came as a bit of shock, the selectors were not interested in the playing ability but rather the athletic performance of the kids. My son was not selected. At this point, I asked him if he wanted to take rugby very seriously and train like a professional and use this setback as a motivator to build a body that was so athletic that no selector could deny him, he said he did and we both committed to doing so from that day forth.

We purchased a 50kg Barbell set and bench (Standard not Olympic) and began doing everything wrong! Bodybuilder type split routine with no linear progression, no consistency or real plan. So as you would expect the results were negligible.

I then decided to research how successful athletes (not just rugby players) prepared and trained for their sport and in particular speed and agility. The one thing that came up time and again was to get stronger. This then led me on to sites such as Stronglifts.com. After reading all the information and all the blogs/forum posts (and I do mean ALL) on StrongLifts.com I decided that SL5x5 was the way to go and we purchased a power rack and 50kg more weight plates off ebay.

He started StrongLifts 5x5 in the rugby off season in April 2008 and we both couldn't be happier with the results. He started with just the bar (standard 6 foot bar, weighs around

8kg, although we count it as 5kg) on all lifts, we replaced BB rows for power cleans (only change to the system we made).

Gains	April 2008	Sep 2010	Gains so Far...
Age	13y	15y	
Height	5'4"	5'10"	+6"
Body-weight	52,6kg	85,7kg	+33,1kg
Body-fat	14%	12%	-2%
Deadlift	8kg	140kg	+132kg
Squat	8kg	150kg	+142kg
Bench Press	8kg	90kg	+82kg
Press	8kg	62,5kg	+54,5kg
Power Cleans	8kg	80kg	+72kg
Pull-ups	0	16 reps	

Training – Due to the amount of rugby he plays, it was difficult to get 3 StrongLifts 5x5 sessions in a week; sometimes this was done once or twice a week. During the off season the program was followed religiously along with 3 sessions a week of hill sprints, prowler sled work and tractor tyre flipping, speed work etc for strength cardio.

Diet – This has generally been an average teenager diet i.e pretty crappy! We have toyed with whey supplements in periods but have just tried to gradually increase the amount of calories consumed and protein per day. This is the only area where my son has not been consistent. This changed this year when he made a conscious effort to consume 5000 calories a day using GOMAD. He has now done this for 3 months with impressive results.

So, the results (apart from the significant weight and strength gains) are that he was invited after being seen playing to another county trial where he was selected 6 months after being rejected. I put this down to strong lifts, thank you.

In the English rugby youth set up (Age 13 – 17) there are rugby academies linked to Premiership clubs called EPDGs (Elite Player Development Groups). 1 year after starting StrongLifts 5x5 my son played for a team against the EPDG and although the team lost, he impressed in the game and was invited to join the EPDG. He continues to love rugby and still wants to play professionally (but understands the likely hood of this happening) but also now loves weight training with a passion.

As a father, it is sometimes difficult to hear dissenting voices from family, friends other rugby people, who all seem to have an opinion on my son's development. The usual views are often expressed - weight training will stunt his growth, he shouldn't be lifting that much weight at his age, its dangerous blah blah blah! He has NEVER once injured himself doing StrongLifts 5x5 (I supervise every one of his training sessions) and only positive things have come from it. He has however, broken his wrist, collar bone, 5th metatarsal and torn his ac joint playing rugby. You do the math!

The amount of rugby training and games (Club, school, County and EPDG Teams) he now plays makes it very hard to do and recover from weight training. His current schedule is the following.

- Monday – School rugby training
- Tuesday – AM – squat, chest, powerclean (5x5 lower rep power session) PM - EPDG rugby Training
- Wednesday – County Training
- Thursday – School rugby training
- Friday – Stronglifts – ALL LIFTS (still trying to add 2.5kg)
- Saturday – School Match or day off
- Sunday – Club match

The things we have learnt .

- Read ALL the information Mehdi has provided and follow it!
- Be consistent
- Track your progress
- All ways try to beat your previous lift, this keeps you motivated.
- There is no such thing as a 'Hard gainer' – eat more!
- Ignore what other people are doing and believe in the system.
- Chase your dreams, they might just come true.

Even if my son doesn't achieve his ultimate goal of being a professional rugby player, he has learnt so much on his journey so far that will hopefully benefit him in adult life. Rugby and weight training are very similar in that they teach you self discipline and control and that you should be humble and not have an inflated ego because if you do, someone or something will kick you in the ass.

If you have a son who is serious about his sport, I would highly recommend Stronglifts 5x5, it is a safe and effective system which will enhance your athletic abilities, which in turn will improve your game. The system starts with low weight, which allows for the technique of the exercise to be practiced and developed. When my son first started, the thought of him squatting anywhere near 100kg was a scary thought but now he squats 150kg and he is in complete control of the weight and I have no issue with it because of the way he has progressed.

The myth that is still perpetuated today is that weight training will stunt a young person's growth. The truth is that this is totally unfounded. I did my own research before allowing my son to start and the evidence and now our experience shows this not to be the case. Weight training has no impact on a child's growth plates and you are more likely to damage them playing sports such as soccer, rugby American football etc. A simple Internet search like I did will show that this IS just a myth!! If you follow the StrongLifts 5x5 program as my son did, you will add substantial muscle to your frame and develop an athletic physique. This physique will greatly improve your strength, speed and power in the sporting arena, who doesn't want that?

You only get out what you put in and consistent hard work will pay off. Thanks again

Due the age of my son, I have requested that we remain anonymous. I am however more than happy to discuss any of what you have read here inside the StrongLifts Community.

A proud father

-SL Member "warrior999", England.

Resources

PART V

How to Master Technique on the Squat, Bench, Deadlift, Press and Barbell Row.

- <http://stronglifts.com/how-to-master-the-squat/>
- <http://stronglifts.com/how-to-master-the-bench-press/>
- <http://stronglifts.com/how-to-master-the-deadlift/>
- <http://stronglifts.com/how-to-master-the-overhead-press/>
- <http://stronglifts.com/how-to-master-the-barbell-row/>

StrongLifts Training Programs

- <http://stronglifts.com/stronglifts-5x5/>
- <http://stronglifts.com/stronglifts-intermediate/>
- <http://stronglifts.com/stronglifts-advanced/>
- <http://stronglifts.com/stronglifts-ladder-of-strength/>

StrongLifts on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube

Please join me on all the different StrongLifts social media profiles to gain access to more strength and muscle building strategies, tips and videos.

- <http://facebook.com/stronglifts/>
- <http://twitter.com/stronglifts/>
- <http://www.youtube.com/user/stronglifts/>

StrongLifts Platinum Coaching Programs

- <http://stronglifts.com/platinum-coaching/> (if available)

Comments and Feedback

- mehdi at stronglifts dot com

How Often Have You Started a New Training Program Only to Fall Off The Wagon Weeks Later And Give Up?

If you ever identified with the above headline, then what I'm about to tell you will be of enormous benefit to you and your body. Napoleon Hill said in his bestseller *Think & Grow Rich* that persistence was key to success. Truth is, the best training program is the one you actually stick to. The secret is thus to make StrongLifts 5x5 part of your lifestyle. And one of the easiest ways to accomplish this is to surround yourself with guys who keep you motivated, hold you accountable and with whom you can compete.

We call this a mastermind group, and it is the most essential part of becoming successful (and staying that way) according to Napoleon Hill. The challenge is that strength training tends to be a lonely undertaking. Personal example: most of my friends do not lift weights, those who do are into bodybuilding stuff, and the handful who actually Squat aren't as serious about it as I am. This is why I've trained mostly alone during the past 7 years: most guys are simply holding me back. Maybe that's been your experience too.

This is the exact same reason why my most accomplished StrongLifts Members claim that the StrongLifts Community has been absolutely crucial for their success. Heck, some have gone as far as calling it “*integral to 5x5*”. Here are just some of the benefits they enjoy:

- **Receive Support.** You can ask questions to over 20,000 Members from over 187 countries who have been in your position and achieved your goal, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Questions about your training, review of your technique videos, tips to improve your diet, everything is possible. Members who have been where you are can point out potential hazards, facilitate good decision-making, validate your good ideas, suggest way to improve them, and prompt you to action.
- **Increase Accountability.** You can keep a training log visible to other StrongLifts Members. They can subscribe to your log to follow your updates, encourage you and give input based on what they see you doing and not doing. All of this boosts your accountability because if you don't update, your virtual training partners will ask where you've been. This is very important if you train alone.
- **Skyrocket Your Motivation.** This comes 3 way. One you have Members following your log, encouraging you to work through plateaus or challenging moments in life, and congratulating you every time you hit a milestone like a PR. Two, looking back at your own training log and seeing how far you've come will boost your motivation because success breeds success. Three, you can compete against other Members, for example for the StrongLifts Strongest Man title.
- **Gain Inspiration.** The number 1 thing that holds guys back is time and time again themselves – what they believe they can and cannot accomplish. Inside the SL Community you can connect with thousands of Members from similar backgrounds, bodytypes, ages, height, genetics, race. You can read over 2600 training logs of guys who have transformed their body and life even though they had “limitations”. And examining their transformation will give you a slap over your head.

Most important is that you will finally belong to a group of trusted guys who share your passion for strength training and gaining as fast as possible in both strength and muscle. It sucks to work in a vacuum. You need to air out your ideas in a place where you feel safe, and where you can receive honest input from guys who you can respect. You will never get this kind of usable input from a bunch of drinking friends. Here you can interact with guys who bring years of experience and savvy and pro-level skills to the table.

This group might not be for you. I do not have any patience for bullies, wiseguys, trolls, crabs and other bullshitters that are so common on other online communities. I'm a hard-core success junkie, and I like to be surrounded by guys who do not theorize but who get things done. That's why the most active section inside the StrongLifts Community is the training log category: 2600 training logs, almost 170,000 posts, of guys getting it done. If you're a guy who likes to theorize, but who doesn't walk the walk, you won't fit here.

The StrongLifts Community is for guys who are serious about accomplishing their goal, guys who want to get no B.S. answers to their questions from Members who have been where you are, who have overcome the challenges you're dealing with at this very moment, and who are where you would like to be. It is NOT a plain vanilla forum. We also do NOT have any of those meatheads and armchair specialists. And it is certainly NOT a place where you'll get flamed for asking the "obvious question".

Frankly, the StrongLifts Community is unlike anything you've seen before. Why do you think it's the biggest strength training community in the world counting more than 20,000 Members from 187 countries? And keep in mind many of these Members have been with me for two, three even four years (I only started in 2007 or I'd have older Members), and their continued progress as documented in their training logs has been simply amazing. Several StrongLifts Members are Squatting 400lbs and even 500lbs, Deadlifting 500lbs, Benching 300lbs, and their training logs are there for you to follow and examine.

We're successful and I'd like to join us. Actually, I strongly believe that you have to join us if you're serious about achieving your goals. If you are a guy who likes mature and civilized discussions, backed up with in the trenches experience from thousands of Members, and free of all the bullies and meatheads then this will quickly become your new home.

Ready to Go?

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I hope to hear from you soon,

Stay strong,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Meluhli".